



PROFESSOR
HARUICHI
CHRONICLE

最強無敵の 神楽坂

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SENRI AKATSUKI

明月千里

● 春日歩
HARUICHI

Novel Illustrations



「しまった。これはきっと、
この少年からエッチな拷問を
されてしまう流れ……！」

ルクスが大慌てで否定するが、
ソフィスは完全にビビっていた。



背後に存在する七本の腕の武装が蠢めき、
暗闇の中で淡い光を帯びる。

「それが特装型神装機竜
《ヨルムンガンド》か」

「そうか、
では交渉決裂じゃな」



Prologue – Right Under the Heavens

A female Drag-Knight wearing a pilot suit was staring at a chalk white space.

Glamorous brown skin and black hair, and then a crimson tattoo that was engraved on her cheek. The girl's name was Soffice Xfer.

She was the Seven Dragon Paladin of the Turkimes Confederation, at the same time she was an existence that was called as Key's Key's ^{Xfer} Supervisor.

And then, just the other day, using the function of the Ruin Moon, she made a war declaration towards the world.

「Fuu.....」

She dodged the countless bombardment, weapons, and Divine Raiments approaching her and shifted into counterattack.

After she finished defeating a great number of Drag-Knights, Lux wearing a jet black huge dragon Bahamut appeared in the end.

He employed a varied offense and quickly took countermeasures against Vritra that Soffice was wearing.

It seemed that Lux with Bahamut was specialized for offense, but contrary to expectations he was greatly persevering in his defense too, not giving Soffice the chance to execute a winning move.

「Persistent man, will get hated.」

「Sheesh Soffice, even though you have never even gone out with a boy.」

「.....Animal ear, just shut up, focus on operating the device.」

It was a spherical space that was surrounded with chalk white walls—a battle space.

An Automaton was looking down at Soffice from the viewing room that was

separated from the space by glass to overlook from above.

This battle was an image battle that made use of the simulator that was a facility within the Moon.

The enemy's movement was produced as a virtual image based on the information that the Gear Leader Re Plica recorded.

The opponent wasn't limited to Lux.

All the battles of the Seven Dragon Paladins' members had been recorded, with the exception of Magialca. Even the main force of the New Kingdom like Lisha and the others had their data recorded too.

What they understood from that was that their strength really couldn't be underestimated.

If it was an opponent she couldn't match, she would exercise her ingenuity and escape.

Winning without fighting was Soffice's ideal, but as expected the Seven Dragon Paladins wouldn't be that naïve.

「Haa, haah.....!」

Soffice activated Vritra's Divine Raiment and like that she shot down Lux's Bahamut.

With this, she had managed to defeat most of the opponents that could possibly stand in her way as enemies.

「That's amazing desu, Soffice. With this your preparation is perfect desu!」

Re Plica turned off the simulator and came down from the viewing room and went to Soffice's side.

The fox ears growing from her head which was the special trait of an Automaton were happily twitching—but,

「Unfortunately, a simulation will only be a simulation in the end. Especially the survivor of that family of traitors, Lux is very troublesome. The strength to create new tactics in the middle of a fight cannot be measured in here.」

Soffice replied bluntly while dispelling her armor with an expression that

contained no carelessness.

She put on a robe and like that she exited the room along with Re Plica and headed to the corridor.

「The situation is advantageous for us, but we will get surrounded if the enemy outwits us even once. If that happens then even I won't be able to escape..... I especially don't want to face Singlen.」

「You are absurd as usual desu. More importantly, is this really alright? Turning the world into an enemy—」

「.....」

Re Plica looked down anxiously. In response Soffice fell silent.

「It's scary. My body is still shivering.」

Soffice was talking with an emotionless tone without any inflection, however she spoke out her true feelings.

Yes, it was scary.

But she couldn't take it back anymore.

She used the function of the seventh Ruin, the Moon to control the remaining two Ragnarok and threatened all the countries including the New Kingdom.

She told them to not interfere from now on until she installed all the Grand Forces into the Ruins and reached Avalon.

She understood that she was causing a great chaos.

Even so—Soffice was convinced that this was the best method for the world's sake.

She couldn't hand over Avalon to that family of traitors or to anyone else.

Soffice was fighting in order to fulfill the will of Uruk Xfer, her little sister who was betrayed and killed in the past because she was wishing for peace.

Two months were remaining until the world ended due to Sacred Eclipse.

Surely the world alliance and also the imperial family of the Lords would oppose her with great desperation.

To the degree that there was a possibility that just the Ragnarok and Moon's attacks wouldn't be enough to hold them in check.

No, if it were the remaining opponents, they would surely launch their countermeasure at the opening that Soffice exposed from here on.

She didn't want to borrow Dragon Marauder's strength anymore, but she wouldn't be able to win if she didn't make use of them well.

「Uruk..... What you left undone isn't something easy.」

The expressionless Soffice put on a faint self-depreciating smile.

The entrance to Avalon would appear soon in the abandoned capital Guernica in the Marcafal Kingdom. (TN: In vol 11 the name of the capital was Gelsera, but in here it's changed like this. Don't know why myself.)

Even the enemy surely understood, that the greatest opening would show up when the gate was opened after the seven Grand Forces were installed.

The seventh Ruin, Moon.

Under the sky that was nearest to the heavens.

The girl renewed her determination while overlooking the capital of the New Kingdom.

Episode 1 – Those Who Wish For a Pact

Part 1

Only a few days ago, a letter from Queen Raffi was delivered, telling that the Moon was making rounds above the sky of the New Kingdom in a constant cycle.

The other day, a survivor of the Key's Supervisor made a war proclamation against the world.

And then at the same time, the Drag-Knight who was also the Seven Dragon Paladin of the Turkimes Confederation, Soffice Xfer also hired the mercenary Dragon Marauder.

The seventh Ruin, the Moon. Among its facilities, there was an installation of a horn flute sound which had the power to give simple orders to even the Ragnarok. The Lord, Listelka Rei Arshalia informed that in the summit.

She had also informed them of the trait of the remaining two Ragnarok.

One of them was named Iblis.

A demon type Abyss—its form was like a Diablos that was further enlarged and strengthened, but it was possessing strength that was incomparable to a mere Diablos.

Its terrifying ability was mind pollution.

It would greatly open the wound in the heart and erupt the despair inside.

The sound wave that Iblis emitted as well as its eye glint itself seemed to have a powerful hypnotic effect. The side that got hit by it would kill their own

comrades while thinking that they were in the right.

Just the ability of manipulating something unseen like the heart was already something unmanageable.

And then, this effect couldn't be blocked by a Drag-Ride's barrier.

The only weakness of it was that as long as they could take distance from the pollution, the effect would dull and a means of survival could be seen in long range battle, but it was nearly impossible to defeat that powerful Abyss with only sniping and bombardment.

And then, the other Ragnarok's name was Deus ex Machina.

That Ragnarok looked like a giant mechanical contraption. It possessed the ability of space control.

It was a power that could teleport itself, as well as enemies, allies, and objects.

It was similar to the Divine Raiment of Celis's Lindwurm, but its range and effectiveness was in a different dimension.

Furthermore its outer shell was covered with Mithrildyte like a Drag-Ride, multiple layers of it, so normal attacks wouldn't work against it.

Furthermore its physical attacks using pure blows was in a class of instant death, because of that it was an extremely dangerous opponent.

In any case, even one of them was a threat in the level that could destroy a city in one night, and even a country in several days.

Starting from the new kingdom, all the countries were taken hostage by Soffice. The world alliance who was prevented from counterattacking was spending all their time holding war council every day to plan a countermeasure, but they couldn't find any good idea.

The Seven Dragon Paladins as well as the military of each country were forced to take no action. For a while they would spend their time guarding their own countries and rested.

Part 2

「The first snow will come down soon.」

The tranquil air that was cold and dry.

Airi muttered that and looked up to the sky in the courtyard of the Academy.

The sun was shining at the zenith of the sky without a single cloud.

Airi who had a white scarf wrapped around her neck was having lunch together with her big brother Lux on a bench.

「The time to sortie might come anytime, I've got to be careful to not catch a cold.」

Lux who was eating a hotdog beside her replied to Airi calmly like that.

「Well, please rest well for now. It will be troubling if Nii-san dies again.」

「A,ahaha.....」

Lux could only smile wryly toward his little sister's sarcastic words and reproachful gaze.

Just the other day, he acted recklessly to save Yoruka and almost died. Because of that he was thoroughly scolded. It was nostalgic.

A few days later after that.

He was called to war councils with the Seven Dragon Paladins as well as with the New Kingdom frequently. Lux was lacking sleep from making round trips between Cross Field and the royal capital so often.

Regardless of that, they were unable to find an effective means against the aforementioned traitor—Soffice Xfer.

For the time being Lux was also liberated from the war council and he was forced to wait for orders in this stalemate situation.

With how the Moon was hidden with camouflage functions, they couldn't catch up no matter what.

Because even if the world alliance put effort to search for it, the safety of each country from Soffice's threat couldn't be guaranteed.

Their side wouldn't be able to move without some amount of prospect of winning, as well as the resolve to sacrifice country and people.

It was unclear whether this was the cause or not, but the capture of the other Ruins were also stopped, so there was almost no battle occurring.

At most it was only clearing up the Abyss that came out from the Ruins and caused harm sometimes.

The ancient race, the Lords who were the owners of the Ruins previously presented three tasks to be solved. With the case of the other day, all three had been achieved.

The seven huge crystals that were hidden inside the body of the Ragnarok—Grand Forces.

In order to stop the world destruction by Sacred Eclipse that would happen in two more months, it was necessary to reach Avalon, the legendary land where the legacy of the ancient era was sleeping.

With Soffice's appearance, the remaining tasks had also become something clear.

When the information of the Ruins and the Ragnarok that the Lord Listelka possessed was compared with the present situation, it became like below.

—

The first Ruin – Babel—Ragnarok Metatron was destroyed, liberation complete.

The second Ruin – Dungeon—Ragnarok Fenrir was destroyed, liberation complete.

The third Ruin – Ark—Ragnarok Poseidon was destroyed, liberation complete.

The fourth Ruin – Hall—Ragnarok Deus ex Machina was living, not liberated.

The fifth Ruin – Gigas—Ragnarok Yggdrasil was destroyed, liberation complete.

The sixth Ruin – Garden—Ragnarok Iblis was living, not liberated.

The seventh Ruin – Moon—Ragnarok Phoenix already died, Ruin liberation complete.

—

And then Avalon—as long as the command to stop functions from Avalon wasn't given to Sacred Eclipse, it was possible for it to revive no matter how many times, right now it was waiting to revive.

The remaining Ragnarok including Sacred Eclipse was three at maximum, but if it was only to obtain the Grand Force it was enough to destroy two.

If a Grand Force was installed in the Ymir Theocracy's Hall and the New Kingdom's Garden each, it would be fine with that and this battle would also end.

—

「On the other hand, the three tasks that the Lords presented—the discovery of the seventh Ruin, Moon, the annihilation of Dragon Marauder, and the discovery of the traitor, all of them will be resolved if that Soffice Xfer and the others are defeated, but—」

「Yes. That's not something easy. Even the representatives of each country know that although they won't say it out loud.」

Airi's words that sounded like talking to herself was responded to by Lux with a complicated expression.

It wasn't because the countries' representatives weren't able to think of any method to counterattack.

Although they were able to think up some ideas, it was just that they were difficult to execute.

「If we ignore the threat and launch a counterattack, it will be either the Ymir Theocracy or the New Kingdom that gets attacked.」

Airi who guessed that also leaked out a sigh that was laced with resignation.

Because the remaining Ruins that hadn't been liberated were the New Kingdom's Garden and the Ymir Theocracy's Hall, it was normal to think that the Moon was hiding near one of them.

In case the world alliance ran out of patience and launched a counterattack, the attack of the Moon would be first pointed to one of the two—such possibility was high.

If they kept obeying Soffice like this, she would monopolize Avalon.

In other words, sooner or later, the time where they had to counterattack with the resolve of sacrifice would come.

「In the worst case—the Lords will bring together all the countries excluding the New Kingdom and Ymir and launch a counterattack. In that case, the New Kingdom will.....」

There was a risk that they would receive the whole attack of the Moon's main cannon, Abyss army, and two Ragnarok.

After a war council on a certain day, Lux got pointed out by Singlen of the Seven Dragon Paladins.

—

『If you swear loyalty to me, then I won't be reluctant to settle this anytime. You staying quiet like this while watching the New Kingdom's downfall will make the name of hero cry right?』

—

In short, if the situation stayed like this the world alliance would in time counterattack while resigning themselves about the sacrifices.

At that time it would be the New Kingdom that would become the very first target of harm.

The remaining Ruins that hadn't been liberated were only in the New Kingdom and Ymir, so considering the convenience to install the Grand Force, there was a high chance the Moon would be hiding inside one of those countries.

Naturally, in the world alliance summit, the two countries opposed launching any assault towards the Moon.

But, the Lords who were the center of the battle for the sake of liberating Avalon wouldn't back down from taking a forceful stance.

Thus—if the situation reached an impasse and they were driven to the wall, the New Kingdom and Ymir might get discarded by the alliance.

They were already nearing the brink of a falling out.

Of course, Lux refused Singlen's invitation.

Or rather, Singlen had already seen through that Lux would refuse and he retracted the invitation back as he pleased.

As always that man couldn't be dealt with normal means.

Similar to his elder brother Fugil, Singlen's secret was also still covered in darkness.

—

「Hey, if you are free then help out with decorating here.」

「I'm busy right now so I can't. After all this time we are the ones making the sweets for all the students.」

「It's better for the appearance to be modest. It's the Holy Night Festival after all—」

「How about we ask the headmaster? Surely she will think of something good.」

「You're right. This year there is also someone for the prince role.....」

—

Around Lux and Airi who were confirming the situation with each other using small voices, female students were decorating the courtyard busily with enjoyment.

「.....How should I say it, even in this kind of time everyone in the Academy is like always huh.」

Airi let out a wry smile along with a deep sigh, but in contrast with her tone, her expression wasn't hard.

「Isn't it fine? Everyone doesn't know after all.」

Lux nodded with a smile.

The danger of world destruction by Sacred Eclipse and the predicament the New Kingdom was in were only known by some in order to avoid mayhem.

Not just the common people, even most of the military cadets in the Academy weren't told, that was why the female students were absorbed with the preparations of the Holy Night Festival that was an event at the end of the year.

But, in any case they couldn't act right now even if they wanted. It would be pointless even if they were too tense.

Rather, this might be their last chance to relax their body and mind.

Lux was still training to the degree that would keep his body from dulling, but Airi stopped him from doing more than that.

「Well then Nii-san, just because you are on stand by, please don't let your mind wander too much by all means. Of course it's not just about battles, but even other things too—」

「Right. I know.....wait, what do you mean other things?」

「I don't know. Please try asking your own heart.」

Airi ended the talk brusquely and left.

When Lux tilted his head in puzzlement, the female students who were staring at the two from afar surrounded him.

「Lux-kun. Won't you spend time with us at the Holy Night Festival seven days from now?」

「Eeh!?!」

「It's fine isn't it? Recently you are busy with work and cannot take a break right?」

「Occasionally you should deepen your bonds with your school friends too, not just with everyone from Syvalles.」

Perhaps they had been waiting until now, several female students regardless of their grade surrounded him.

「Err..... But the Seven Dragon Paladins might need to act anytime, taking that much time is—」

「Don't say that. The requests made to Lux-san have also been piling up quite a bit.」

「.....」

He felt a bit pained when the matter of him recently being unable to accomplish the chores in the Academy was mentioned.

(As I thought, it might be unfair for me to keep only doing the work of Lisha-sama and the others, and Syvalles.....)

Thinking that, Lux was going to reply to the girls surrounding him, it was then—

「—That's enough-!」

A trio with armbands of 『Holy Night Festival management committee』 on their arms, Sharis, Tillfur, and Noct cut in between Lux and the female students.

「Oh no! It's the Triad!?!」

「Run away, if it's now we will still make it—」

The students spoke such things in panic, but their escape path was blocked by Tillfur and Noct.

「No. I have memorized everyone's faces, so running away will make your offense heavier.」

「Yeep yeep, the offense of stealing a march is heavy y'know?」

「He—Lux-kun is already in the middle of exhausting work, he is also shortening his break time to do the requests in the Academy. We should have told that to you all too. If you bother him even more than this, you will become unable to participate in the Holy Night Festival.」

At the end when Sharis declared that, several students lowered their heads in great hurry.

「So, so so so so sorry-! It's just our sudden impulse-!」

「Please. I'm begging you at least not that—!」

「It's fine if you understand. Now, please firmly remind everyone else too. That's the atonement that you all can do.」

「Ye, yeeees-!」

The girls only said that before leaving with loud footsteps.

Only the Triad and Lux were left behind around the bench in the courtyard.

「As expected everyone becomes boisterous when it's the end of the year. The number of people violating the rules is also increasing.」

「No, what rule.....」

As expected, Lux felt that it was an exaggeration, but it was amazing how he was unable to completely deny it.

「It was still better when Coral was here though. But the period of aide exchange is over already, now everyone is starving for boys.」(Tillfur)

「I don't really get it but, thank you for saving me, everyone.」

For now Lux said his thanks for getting saved from his predicament, but Noct shook her head slightly in front of him.

「No. We were forbidden to speak, but actually this is Airi's instruction so that Lux-san won't be too burdened. Even though she looks like that, she is taking various things into consideration.」

「Is, that so.....」

Perhaps it was just as expected, it seemed that Airi was worried about him in proportion to his recklessness.

Especially the last time, although it couldn't be helped, he was completely too reckless. He had to make it up to her somehow.

「But, was it okay to chase them away like that?」

「By okay you mean? Hohou. So Lux-kun actually wants to spend a night with those girls too. That means we have been acting impertinently.」

「Lux-chi is also a boy after aall~」

「Yes. I think I'll report to Airi that this is just her being too meddlesome.」

「Wai-, you are wrong! Stop it!」

Sharis and Tillfur teased him with black smiles, while Noct gave the final blow with a bland emotionless tone. It caused Lux to be flustered.

「That's not what I mean. It's, if you three crack down on everyone too much, your relationship with the surroundings will—」

Hearing Lux's words, the Triad stared at him blankly with opened mouths for a moment, then they showed a somewhat creeped out expression.

After that, Sharis smiled mischievously and poked on Lux's forehead.

「What an exasperating junior. Even though you are shouldering that much by yourself, you are still worrying about us. It looks like a really drastic measure will be needed to treat this huh.」

「Yes. It seems that it's just as Airi instructed, it will be necessary to carry out that strategy.」

「Resolve yourself okay, Lux-chi. Don't think that you will be able to go through this one week from now leisurely.」

「Eh.....?」

Seeing the bewildered Lux, the three smiled mysteriously.

It seemed that a disturbance would visit him before the Holy Night Festival that might be the last chance for repose.

Part 3

「Now then..... First, I should go look how Yoruka is doing.」

Lux who received a memo from the Triad read the names of the members written there. He would look around for them.

It seemed that the members whose names were written there couldn't call out to Lux until the Holy Night Festival.

Why did they do such thing?

Lux was thinking about that, but this was the decision of the girls after they talked with each other.

Perhaps it was so that they wouldn't hinder Lux's rest?

Or perhaps they had another motive?

The list of names that was written on the memo was the names of the members who were intimate with him.

Lisha, Krulcifer, Philuffy, Celis, Yoruka, Airi.....Headmaster Relie.

Under the management of the Triad, they wanted him to go meet with those girls just once before the Holy Night Festival.

The accumulated chores for today were only simple helping out requests from the students, so he finished several of them quickly while heading to Yoruka's location first.

There was a small hospital ward called the aid room inside the Academy's grounds.

With how daily the Drag-Ride practice and battles with the Abyss were, it was inevitable that injuries would occur. Sometimes there would even be those who got seriously injured that they were sent home temporarily.

But, very rarely, there would also be those with special circumstances who

couldn't go home.

The aid room was for the sake of giving a place to live in temporarily for such seriously injured people. Lux went there bringing flowers and fruits.

It went without saying that he went there to visit Yoruka who was seriously injured from the fight the other day. When Lux was going to open the door, he suddenly came to a stop.

「.....-!? Wait. Could it be, this flow—」

Yes.

Since he came to this Academy, he experienced several flow of events where he made a blunder towards the female students.

He mustn't casually enter a room with a girl inside.

Especially Yoruka, she was dressed with high exposure rate even at normal times. Now that she was injured and had bandages wrapped around her body—there was a high possibility that she was totally naked wearing only bandages.

「.....Wait, just what am I thinking!」

Lux's heart was pounding hard from imagining that in his mind while carefully surmising the situation inside.

This was Yoruka, he couldn't be assured with just knocking and her saying it was okay.

After all she would surely invite Lux inside without reservation even if her skin was currently exposed, so he had to tell her beforehand to wear clothes properly.

「Somehow, it feels embarrassing to meet Yoruka.....」

Lux's cheeks were faintly blushing and he recalled their parting last time.

—

『Perhaps, I am completely in love with Aruji-sama.』

—

Her face that was talking with feverish breathing, her body glued to him, and then kissing him.

Perhaps that was the first time anyone was able to see her human side, which was directed only to Lux. And because of that, Lux himself now also saw her as a human even more than before.

Even though recently his feelings towards the other girls was also becoming stronger, getting such thing done to him additionally was completely unbearable.

(Calm down, right now isn't the time for that. As a Seven Dragon Paladin, as Lisha-sama's knight, I have to concentrate on saving the New Kingdom.)

Lux took a deep breath several times and calmed his heartbeat, then he knocked on the door.

「Yoruka? I came to visit—are you awake?」

He called out, but there was no reply.

Wondering if she was sleeping, he sharpened his hearing, but he couldn't hear anything like a sleeper's breathing.

He tried calling out several times but there was no reaction, so he opened the door slightly and peeked inside, but there was no one there.

「Eh.....?」

He thought that she was surely in complete bed rest because of her injury, could she have gone to the toilet?

When he thought that, he saw the figure of a half-naked girl swinging a Sword Device outside the window inside the room.

「Aah, I see, she is practicing her sword—wait, what are you doing Yoruka!?!」

Lux entered inside the room in panic, opened the veranda's window and got outside.

Unbelievably, even though she had one arm broken, she was doing swinging practice.

Or rather, wasn't she cold in this winter? Or perhaps she was warmed from

moving her body? She had almost no clothes on her body.

She only had bandages that were wrapping her chest and waist, making him felt some kind of indecent immorality from that appearance.

When Lux rushed towards Yoruka, the black haired girl turned towards him smilingly.

「My, do you have business with me Aruji-sama? Even though I will come to you if you call me to be of assistance.」

Yoruka whose left eye was covered with an eye pad burst into a pure smile and turned towards him.

In front of that highly exposed body, Lux was troubled of where to look.

「Tha, that's not it-! I won't think to make you do anything when you are injured like this.」

「That's right isn't it. The current me cannot be useful for Aruji-sama.」

Yoruka suddenly showed a lonely expression, so Lux's thoughts came to a halt.

「No, that's not what I mean..... That's, even Yoruka right now, can become my strength—」

「In other words, Aruji-sama visited me in order to make use of my body then. If that's the case I can be useful even if all I do is only laying down.」

「.....」

The words of the bewitchingly smiling Yoruka caused Lux to stiffen with a complicated expression.

Or rather, he thought that she had become a little more human, but as expected, Yoruka was Yoruka.

She was missing two, or three screws in various places.

「E, enough with that, you..... Anyway let's return inside the room for now. The outside is cold, if you force yourself with your body in that state, your recovery will be slow.」

Lux lent Yoruka his shoulder while trying not to look at her body as much as

possible and led her back to her bed.

During that time, because her body that was exposing a lot of skin was glued closely on him, he felt the warmth and the softness of her breast and his heart was beating fast.

Fortunately, the splints that were placed on the broken places didn't shift and it didn't look like they would need a doctor's help.

Lux who was relieved looked at Yoruka's body once more.

As expected, it was a terrible injury just from looking.

She barely avoided lethal injury, but not just broken bones and cuts, several spots were also bandaged because of bruises from physical blows.

「You have to rest properly until you recover okay?」

「Yes. I will bear it in mind.」

Yoruka nodded unexpectedly obediently with her usual smile.

Most likely, she wasn't forcing herself intentionally.

For her who was standing out in only fighting talent, she had nothing else to do.

But, it was still too early for her to even go through rehabilitation.



Thinking about Yoruka, perhaps he should think about something for her to do to kill time while resting.

「Come to think of it, do you have interest in things like books? You will be able to kill time like that without moving your body.」

「Yes. I'm good at cutting old book.」

Yoruka responded to Lux's question with a bright smile.

.....Let's stop that.

「That's, then how about chatting with friends or—」

「Aruji-sama's little sister brought several people to visit, but for some reason everyone ran away after a while. It was only Noct-san and little sister-san who were barely conversing with me.」

「I see.」

As expected, because of her way of thinking that was peculiar—or outrageous to speak badly, normal students couldn't keep up with Yoruka's flow.

Or rather, it was hard even for Airi and Noct who had excellent skills in human interaction, so it could be easily guessed what would happen.

Nevertheless, if he left Yoruka without being able to make any kind of suggestion like this, she might do something absurd while he wasn't aware.

At their previous date, it seemed she was able to do fishing skillfully, but it didn't look like she held much interest in it that she would take it as a hobby.

After thinking what he should do, Lux suddenly remembered a certain thing.

「Come to think of it, how about fashion? If I remember right, Airi has a catalogue of clothes.」

It was a hobby that was befitting of a girl her age, and she would also be able to bring it up as a topic to talk with girls around her age.

In addition if there was Airi and Noct's cooperation, it was possible to do without her moving her body too much.

「Fashion, is it?」

「Yeah. What do you think? If you look at the catalogue and order something, you can ask Airi or Noct for help in wearing them. Yoruka's usual black outfit is also pretty. I'm interested seeing Yoruka wearing various clothes.」

Lux formed a plan to push her in that direction to stop her from being reckless.

「I.....guess. If Aruji-sama wishes for it, that too isn't bad. If I come up with various looks, then the options for the night service will also increase—」

「Yeah, let's go with that. That's why, you must not act reckless anymore until your wounds are healed.」

Lux was unable to hear what she said in the end well, but Yoruka was unusually accepting, so Lux pushed for it.

After the matter of her recuperation finished there, Yoruka unusually began a talk from her end.

「On that subject, is there any problem with Aruji-sama's body?」

「Eh.....?」

Lux didn't understand what Yoruka was suddenly saying and he tilted his head.

「It's about the case of my incompetence. In order to save me, Aruji-sama was fatally wounded, and then revived from the brink of death due to the existence of Sacred Eclipse.」

「.....」

That's right.

Lux who received the slash of ^{True Battle Array} Shin Senjin from Singlen and Leviathan was dying and received help from Sacred Eclipse.

Sacred Eclipse, that was originally said it would lead the world to destruction.

His memory was vague, but Sacred Eclipse once appeared to save someone.

A member of the imperial family of the ancient era called the Lord, Listelka Rei Arshalia only recognized it as a danger that would destroy the world, but could it be that there was more to it?

It concerned Lux, but that wasn't what Yoruka was concerned about.

「Aruji-sama—have you ever received Baptism like me?」

「.....」

The secret medicine of the ancient era, Elixir. By taking it in, the body would be strengthened due to the astonishing vitalization effect and the user would 『evolve』 into an existence called ^{Phantasmal Devil} Nocturne.

The user's physical ability, senses, and even regenerative ability would become equal with the ^{Phantasmal Divine Beast} Abyss, and they would display inhuman strength.

But—that strength was only forcefully drawn out from the body, it wouldn't last long.

Not only that, when someone forced themselves too much while transformed into a Nocturne, when they returned to normal they would use up their life force due to the backlash and die.

At that time, Lux only got his wound healed without any change occurring in his body.

「I don't have any memory of receiving Baptism, but if I actually received it in the past, the devil transformation won't occur?」

「I don't know that much. Baptism is a surgery to blend Elixir to a part of the body, but the process is accompanied by terrible pain. Even I who only got Baptism applied into a single eye was told by Hayes that normally only twenty percent would survive the procedure.」

「For now, I don't feel anything out of place in my body but—」

Rather, his body's condition was great.

Because he was continuously going through fierce battles since he became a member of the Seven Dragon Paladins, fatigue was piling up inside him, but thanks to Elixir it felt like everything was recovered.

If, there was some kind of strange secret in Lux's body—

「Tsu.....」

- Bzz* Lux's sight was covered with static like a sandstorm and the sight of

the aid room was erased.

Again.

Recently scenes of something that shouldn't exist in his memory would emerge at the back of his mind.

If there was anything that felt out of place in his body, there was just that.

「Aruji, sama?」

「.....Nn. No, it's nothing.」

Lux noticed Yoruka's voice calling him and he returned to his senses.

In any case, he didn't understand anything fully about it in the current situation.

「Then, do your best in the matter of fashion without forcing yourself okay?」

「Yes. I will consult with Noct-san and the others so that I will be able to answer Aruji-sama's expectations.」

Lux left the aid room after receiving a favorable reply.

For the time being it seemed he was able to handle his discussion with Yoruka well, so he sighed in relieve.

He avoided staying for long and returned to his room temporarily. Next he would follow the memo and visit the girls who were his dear companions.

「With this—I have a rough idea of what present to give Aruji-sama.」

After Lux left, Yoruka made such mutter that was filled with implication and stared outside the window.

Lux didn't notice three girls were standing watch from the garden ahead of her gaze.

Part 4

After parting from Yoruka, Lux finished two Academy chores in the afternoon—and the evening arrived.

The sun set faster due to the winter. Lux moved his legs towards the Academy's practice ground in order to meet Celis.

He imagined that she was training in the practice ground like usual, but he only found the Triad in their pilot suits there looking completely exhausted.

「Glad you could make it, Lux-chi. You are latee」

「It's unfortunate, but the girl you set your sight on has returned to the girl's dormitory.」

「Yes. If it's Celis-senpai, she has already bathed and returned to the girl's dormitory.」

Tillfur, Sharis, and Noct returned an answer in turn before Lux asked.

He understood that they guessed he was coming to visit Celis seeing how he came to the practice grounds at this time.

But,

「Thank you. But, putting that aside—everyone, what are you doing?」

The three were breathing hard while lying on the ground tiredly.

Their fatigued state that was unthinkable from normal Drag-Ride training shocked Lux, but the three showed a smile of acting strong telling him he didn't need to be concerned.

「It's great and all that the princess strengthened our Drag-Rides for us, but from there it's difficult to skillfully use an EX-type Drag-Ride. Even with Celis's guidance, we aren't able to overcome this difficulty in a brief space of time.」

Sharis smiled while lying down on the ground with gasping breath all along.

The Triad finally succeeded in wearing the reinforced type general purpose Drag-Rides also because of Lisha's tuning that matched the Drag-Rides to the three's bodies, but as expected it was difficult for them to use it well.

And so, they trained with Celis till exhaustion.

It was understandable.

Not just in piloting Drag-Rides, Celis was also first class in fundamental stamina and mental concentration. And then she was even receiving severe special education in fencing and martial arts since her childhood.

It was to the degree that even the current Lux couldn't keep up with her training.

「Now, we don't want our unsightly figures to be watched all the time. Go to where she is. Surely she is in her room already.」

「Thank you very much. But, is everyone alright? It will be cold if you three keep staying here like that—」

Lux sent them a worrying gaze, but Sharis shook her head powerlessly.

「We will accept just your feelings. There is no way we, whose role is to manage the pact of those girls, can do any transgressions.」

「Yes.....?」

「Aaa! Geez Sharis, that is a secret agreement you know!」

「Yes. Anyway, we are alright, so go to Celis-senpai's place.」

Tillfur lost her composure hearing Sharis's mysterious sentence.

Noct put that aside and told him that blandly while still laying down.

「I, I get it. Everyone, don't force yourself too much.」

Lux said that while tilting his head in puzzlement, then he headed to the girl's dormitory.

He headed to the floor of the third years, but he was nervous because there were a lot of female seniors around there.

He knocked the room of Celis where she should be alone right now, but there

was no reply.

Lux wondered whether she was away, but there was a presence inside.

When he twisted the door knob and opened it, Celis was standing inside in her uniform.

「—But, in the end I couldn't deny it. I also wish to obtain the chance to give him a present. As the captain, being infatuated at this period of time is something that I ought not do, I understand that but.....」

「Celis-senpai?」

Was she doing monologue like usual when she had no one to talk to?

It looked like there was no cat, bird, or even flower in front of her, but he also couldn't see anyone else.

When Lux called out while feeling such anxiety, Celis turned around in panic.

「.....-!? Lu, Lux!? Since when were you there? It's not permitted entering the room quietly like that!」

「I, I'm sorry. There was no reply even when I knocked so—」

Lux apologized while smiling wryly. In response, Celis's cheeks reddened.

Perhaps he should say as expected, she was usually awe-inspiring, but this side of her was lovely.

「That's, is senpai worried about something? I will listen if senpai is alright with me though?」

Yes.

He came here in order to check on Celis.

For some reason the girls wouldn't call out to Lux until the day of the Holy Night Festival, so he was going to call out to them one by one and check on them instead.

「N-, no! Rather than worry, this is a part of my self-tempering so.....!」

Lux thought that her figure which immediately acted strong was lovable.

「Is that so, -wait, looking closer isn't there a mirror on the wall!? Is Celis-

senpai finally starting to talk to yourself now!?!」

「Sa, saying it like that is not permitted-! That makes it sound like even a doll won't listen to me talking!」

Could it be she was finally starting to talk to her other self because she had no partner to open her heart to about her worry? Lux thought, but it seemed that wasn't it.

「That's, this is just a rehearsal. In order to convey my own opinion when the time comes—」

「Could it be, it's about the aide work?」

Celis was serving as the aide of Lux who was a member of the Seven Dragon Paladins that were the representatives of each country in the world alliance.

During this time, for a while there would be no direct battle and a lot of war councils instead. As long as the standoff with Soffice Xfer was continuing, there would be a lot of occasions of conferences still.

And then, the New Kingdom that had one of the remaining Ruins that hadn't been liberated within its territory would surely be put in a predicament.

At that time, what would matter wouldn't be just fighting strength, but also the skill of being able to speak at meeting. She must be trying to become Lux's strength in such time too.

Although, he also felt that the content of her speech just now seemed different from that.

「That too. My forte is in individual fights, but from a strategic point of view, I still cannot be called as satisfactory, so although I don't think that the disadvantageous situation of the New Kingdom can be overturned, but if I learn about the history and force of each country, even I might be able to be of slight assistance to Lux.」

「.....」

「Wha, what's the matter Lux? Did I say anything stra—」

「No. I'm just thinking, that Celis-senpai is amazing as expected.」

Lux's expression loosened into a smile while he formed those words.

Even though it was already splendid even with her just playing an active enough role as the strongest Drag-Knight of the Academy, and as an aide of the Seven Dragon Paladins, she was thinking further than that and polished herself.

Such continuous thick effort wasn't something that anyone could do.

「But, please don't force yourself too much. It might not be suitable to say this in this time of emergency but, Celis-senpai too has become able to consult with your surroundings little by little.」

「Wha-..... that's, Lux is unfair. Even if I am told that by you who is forcing yourself harder than anyone else, there is no persuasiveness in it.」

「No, I too have no such awareness though.....」

While saying that, he thought to himself that certainly it might be so if it was in the meaning of forcing oneself.

As expected, both of them might be similar.

「Then, this is a rare chance, how about we take a breather after this? It's a good timing that I have just finished with my chores for today.」

「I, is that so!? Then I have a place that I wish to see—」

Celis unusually made a suggestion, which Lux accepted.

With thick outfit to keep out the cold and tea pot in hand, they headed to the rooftop of the girl's dormitory.

Under the cold weather, the two stood side by side on the rooftop space.

「This place—I found it in the past. When my worries piled up without me being able to tell anyone, I often pondered alone here.」

It seemed that there was no cloud today, they were able to look up at the night sky that was sprinkled with stardust.

The ultramarine sky with transparent atmosphere was a scene that somehow made the heart to be fired up.

「—It's, beautiful.」

It was a flowery word that was really trite, but Lux couldn't think of any other word.

It wasn't just beautiful, it felt like this sky and starlight cleared the heart and made one's own existence to stand out in the dark—such thought was coming and going.

That they were just a tiny existence after all.

That even with that understanding, the light of their life was burning like the stars.

Celis was letting out a white sigh beside him while looking up to the sky with a quiet smile.

「That's..... you don't need to worry. I'm also changing little by little.」

「Eh.....?」

「It's about the training. Recently the Triad said that they want to become strong and accompany my training. From there it's transmitted to the other members of Syvalles too. They will be tired and finish up in the middle, but right now I'm already able to open my heart to everyone more than the past. I am able to convey my true self.」

「I'm glad.....」

「Lux is visiting me like this because you are worried about that isn't it? Though it's a bit pathetic that a junior is worrying about my interactions with other people.」

「Such thing—」

「No, I feel happy that you came to meet me right now. For me who was fighting alone all this time, I never thought that having someone who will let me rely on them will be this pleasant.」

「.....」

He watched from the side the face of Celis who was watching the stars while sipping the tea they brought.

The dignified face of the girl that was illuminated by faint light looked really

beautiful.

「-.....!?!」

Then, cold wind blew at that timing that caused Lux to shiver.

Celis who saw that immediately took her own muffler, got closer to his side and wrapped it around his neck.

「Ce, Celis-senpai!?!」

「Thi, this is-.....I have no ulterior motive! It will be my failure as yo, your aide, if you catch a cold in the middle of the standby-」

Even though her tone was disordered and her cheeks reddened, she leaned closely to Lux's side with a resolute tone.

And so, Lux couldn't think of any other option than to accept her words.

(No wait, her chest is inadvertently touching.....)

Celis's breasts that were bulging out greatly inside her uniform were touching him with her this close.

The soft elasticity that was distinctive even through the thick clothes was making Lux's heart to beat fast. Celis who didn't notice that smiled.



「As I thought..... it's like that.」

「Eh.....?」

Celis's sudden muttering caused Lux to tilt his head.

Then this lovable older aide continued her words with a gentle smile.

「The me in the past continued to work hard due to my sense of duty. In order to make up for my failure towards my teacher Wade-sensei—your grandfather, I tried to act righteously so I won't make a mistake.....」

That was the Celis before meeting Lux and opening up her heart.

She performed steady effort as the eldest daughter of one of the Four Great Nobles and as a Drag-Knight, from her strong sense of duty that was too strong and her past trauma.

「My hard work at that time was difficult but comfortable. Because when I am absorbed with training, when I'm acting righteously following the norm, I'll be able to forget my own sin.」

「Such thing—」

Strictly speaking, Celis's sin didn't exist since the beginning.

There was no one who could find fault in the matter of Lux's grandfather speaking about the Old Empire's wrongdoings.

Lux meeting unhappiness as the result was something that couldn't even be imagined, and the event that resulted from that was nothing more than a mere coincidence.

「Yes. But now, I'm not looking for such comfort from doing training. Because I was able to find a reason to advance forward that is more important than that.」

「.....」

Saying that, Celis kept leaning closely beside Lux while sending him a gaze that was overflowing with gentleness and warm passion.

「It's thanks to you, Lux. When I am working hard because I want to be a senpai that you can respect, to be an aide that you can rely on, I realized that it's an objective that is worth doing. That's why, I can open up my heart to

everyone else too, including the Triad. I'm grateful, really—I'm glad, being able to meet you in this Academy.」

「.....tsu!?!」

Celis's voice sounded comfortable, and her smiling face looked happy.

The moment he saw it from this close, *throb*, the pulse of Lux's heart jumped and his blood flow quickened.

He was happy.

He had no place to belong in the Old Empire, he desperately worked hard to be recognized, and lived until now as the Chore Prince. Such him was being told those words right now.

His chest was filled with emotion to the brim. He couldn't speak any words.

Even though he came because he was concerned about Celis, it was him instead who was getting encouraged.

He felt grateful at such existence of Celis, at the same time warmth was filling his heart.

「That's.....it's me who is really thankful. Please support me for these two months until the matter of Sacred Eclipse is settled.」

「That's.....not permitted.」

「Eh.....?」

Lux completely thought that she would immediately nod in agreement, so he was spontaneously flustered with this reply.

But, he noticed her true intention after seeing her side face that looked sulky and he hurriedly corrected himself.

「Err, please take care of me from here on too all the way.」

「—Yes, I permit it. Please allow me to act as your senpai.」

Seeing her abruptly smiling caused Lux to watch in fascination.

His distance with Celis became close and a feeling that was like an impulse welled up inside him.

But then, Celis cut off her words momentarily and she silently stood up from that spot.

She formed a smile that looked frustrated and a bit regretful, then she continued.

「Let's meet again later Lux. I, if I continue like this, it's, that will be a betrayal to everyone else.」

「Betrayal, what do you mean—?」

「Tha, that is a secret! E, even I have something that I cannot tell Lux. If it's a promise with those girls, who are harboring the same feeling.....」

Lux tilted his head at Celis's flustered tone.

Could it be, this was related with the so called 『pact』 that the Triad mentioned?

「I give you that muffler as the present to you for the Holy Night Festival. Then, excuse me.」

After exchanging only those words, the two returned from the rooftop to the girl's dormitory and parted from each other.

Lux took a deep breath alone and looked up to the night sky from the window in the corridor.

Thanks to Celis, the wall inside Lux himself was broken.

Because of that, he was able to understand that the good will of the girls was surpassing mere friendship and respect.

He merely didn't say it because he couldn't relax his focus at this time where the world was on the brink of danger.

However—if this battle was over.

If they were able to overcome the world destruction by Sacred Eclipse.

「I have to, give my answer huh.....」

Lux returned to his room after muttering that alone.

The stars were continuing to shine above the dormitory even with its lights

off.

Episode 2 – Double Layered Trap

Part 1

And then, the next morning.

After waking up Lux washed his face and headed to the dining hall. There, Headmaster Relie was waiting.

He was told that she wanted him to stop doing Academy chores for a while and focus on helping with the Holy Night Festival.

By the way, it seemed that the Academy put much effort into the festival, from outfits to be used as costumes until things like material transport and construction using Drag-Rides where the citizens would file a complaint if they found out about it.

In the end was this Academy really alright?

Lux, who was anxious about the defense aspect of the Academy, asked Relie whether there was anything that he should do, but what came back to him along with a smile was the next sentence.

『If it's about insuring the evacuation route of the citizens as well as the strengthening of the monitoring in the area around the rampart, then we have already been cooperating with the mayor since a long time ago. You see, this kind of thing will be too late already if you need to suddenly worry about it.』

That might be a sound argument.

Since the danger of the Ruins was increasing, the defense in Cross Field was also increased starting from a few months ago. In the first place any hasty effort

would be bound to fail against that Moon and two Ragnarok.

It would also be troubling if the current war situation was known and the people panicked, so this was the best they could do right now.

By the way, soon the members of the Seven Dragon Paladins would be sent to the Academy from each country in turn one by one.

The remaining Ruins hadn't been liberated, so reinforcement would be sent every few days to the New Kingdom and the Ymir Theocracy that had large chance to be targeted. In the case of the New Kingdom, the place that was used as the base was Cross Field.

「Oops, more importantly, I have to check the condition of everyone else—」

After parting with Relie, Lux recalled his own task.

Just when he thought there was something out of place, right now because of the so called mysterious 『pact』, Lisha and the others wouldn't call out to him until the Holy Night Festival except when it was an emergency.

(Usually it's always noisy, so this feels lonely as expected.)

There were times when it was troubling that he was surrounded by too many people, but Lux reconfirmed once more that it was fun even then.

Because Krulcifer was also an aide in the Ymir Theocracy that was similarly in danger like the New Kingdom, she would only return to the Academy from the afternoon today.

Then the available choices were to check on Lisha, Philuffy, or Airi.

For now he was thinking to visit Lisha who was highly likely to be at the Drag-Ride's atelier. It was at that timing—the female students in the courtyard called out to him.

「Heey, Lux-kun. Can you do something about that?」

「Yep. She is your fellow Seven Dragon Paladin, right?」

「Err— ah.....」

Lux who looked that way became speechless seeing the bench over there.

A person with a unique look that was like a mix between a merchant and an

alchemist's outfit.

That person was a petite girl with distinctive orange hair that was styled into circle shape and a mature smile.

The owner of the great conglomerate that managed the biggest company in the world, and a Drag-Knight who was the captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Magialca Zen Vanfrick was there.

Different from the vice captain Singlen, she wasn't hostile towards Lux, but she was a difficult girl in a different sense.

「Wait, what are you doing here Captain Magialca?」

「Oh, you are an impolite guy despite being a former prince, aren't you? Even though I showed myself in the Academy with great trouble, how about you pour me a drink?」

She was coming on to him, which was as expected in a sense.

Or rather, looking closer she was drinking alcohol from the afternoon and got drunk.

Guessing from the rich fragrance overflowing from the glass, she must be drinking really expensive and old wine.

「You are asking me what I am doing? What an abrupt greeting. The treatment of Rosa Granhide who you beat up black and blue was finished, so I came here to give the permission for treating your woman, and yet this is what I got.」

「Yes.....?」

Lux tilted his head toward Magialca's statement that was quite incomprehensible.

Then, Magialca whose cheeks reddened from her drunken state brought her body closer towards Lux slowly.

「Wai-, what are you doing!?!」

「Nn. You are free anyway, so I'm thinking to test your body. If you don't like it then try to slip away from me.」

「Kuh.....!」

In fact, even when drunk she locked his arm precisely and he was unable to move.

There was also the fact that she was Philuffy's master and an expert of martial arts. He wasn't her match unarmed.

In addition, Magialca's empty hand was intentionally caressing Lux's chest and stomach. His skin shuddered with itchy sensation.

「My, even Lux-san cannot win—」

「What should we do!? Should we call the Triad!?!」

「Aa! What a thing! But, if we leave from here, we might overlook various things—」

On the other hand, the female students who called him here were saying such thing from afar.

「Wait, everyone from before are hiding while watching this way!」

When Lux was in despair at the female students who turned into curious onlookers, a single girl suddenly approached this way from the opposite direction with brisk pace.

「Eh? Phi-chan?」

「Lu-chan. Long time.」

His childhood friend greeted him with happy emotion faintly oozing out even within her expressionless face.

Her soft pink hair, and her voluptuous chest that were obvious to see even from above the uniform.

Her face that vaguely had traces of childishness remaining in it. She stood up in front of Lux and Magialca.

But, due to the battles when they infiltrated the Heiburg Republic and near the Babel previously. Her body was burdened too much due to the deadly battle against the King of Vices, Calensia Hersmice, so she should be recuperating for a while, but, 「No wait, Phi-chan. There is also your body to consider, but is it okay for you to come towards me?」

It seemed that the girls right now were deciding to not come into contact with Lux from their own end because of the so called pact, with the exception when it was a battle or special situation, but—

「It's fine. Saving Lu-chan is my job.」

「Ah, I see.....」

Philuffy was saying that she was volunteering to guard Lux.

In other words this situation seemed to be a special exception to save Lux from Magialca.

「What's this, good grief, even though I'm thinking that I can enjoy a good man after so long. Can't be helped, I will yield this time to my disciple and go drinking outside.」

Magialca said that and stood up from the bench and let go of Lux.

But, when she was going to separate from him, she quickly whispered with a small voice into his ear.

「Leave your schedule open for the night, it feels like there will be a chance to call for you.」

「-.....!?!」

Those words surely were said not as an individual but as the captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins.

Magialca showed him a grin that was filled with implication before she left.

「Lu-chan. You alright?」

「Ah, yep. I'm fine.」

「Then, come over here. I want you to help out, with the outfit for the costume party.」

Like that, he responded to Philuffy's invitation and went to look at how the preparations for the Holy Night Festival were going.

Somehow it felt like he was completely called out to by Philuffy, but—was this fine?

—

「Captain Sharis, is that acceptable?」

「.....Well, just barely. It's a fact that she saved Lux-kun from a predicament, that needs to be taken into consideration. Either way Lux-kun also hadn't gone to meet her anyway.」

「Yes. Then I'll count that as a visit from Lux-san.」

—

「.....」

Lux was feeling exasperated at the Triad who were whispering secretly behind cover while heading towards the school building's special area.

There, headmaster Relie welcomed him with a smile and let him enter inside the parlor.

There was a sweet smell drifting from the kitchen at the side where sweets seemed to be baked.

Amidst that, he talked casually with Relie about the trend of the situation in Cross Field.

「Even like this I am entrusted with this Academy. I'm continuously having meetings with the mayor and officials of the capital you know? There is no doubt that the upper echelons of the New Kingdom are really nervous.」

「Is that so, as I thought—no wait, what's with that appearance!?!」

「Of course, this is the rehearsal for the costume tournament. I am also participating. In any case, don't you think it really suits me?」

Relie was putting on a witch hat and a complete black costume on the sofa.

The chest area had a deep cut applied, giving her a bewitching charm that was really like a witch.

Besides her was Philuffy wearing a rabbit ears hair band while snacking on sweets.

There was a ribbon on her chest while black cloth was clinging tightly on her body like a pilot suit. Her back and legs were boldly exposed.



It was suggestive, but at the same time the outfit also emphasized cuteness which really suited her.

Coupled with the presence of her big breasts which was her trait, Lux was troubled of where to look.

「No wait, even the headmaster, just what are you thinking!? As expected that appearance is a problem isn't—」

「My? You are not only interested in the little sister, but even in the big sister too? Geez Lux-kun, you are a no good kid aren't you. Eh eh.」

Relie poked on Lux's back with a smile that was completely getting carried away.

While the troubled Lux stiffened, the rabbit eared Philuffy poured him herb tea from the side.

「Onee-chan. It looks like she got a bit of stress piled up, so endure it.」

「Isn't that right.....」

Lux smiled wryly surrounded by the sisters of the Aingram conglomerate.

Sweets with fresh cream that had fruits mixed in, cookies with herbs kneaded in, the heap of Philuffy's special pancakes, and so on. Lux was eating the trial sweets that would be distributed at the Holy Night Festival while spending peaceful time with Philuffy and Relie.

Lux was treated as a guest and sat down on the sofa of the parlor. Then he suddenly saw the back of Philuffy who was brewing replacement tea.

「My, Lux-kun. Where are you looking at? Well, Phi is too cute so it can't be helped.」

「Relie-san. Are you drunk already.....? Tha, that's not it, I'm just thinking that Philuffy's body is beautiful— There is not even any trace of wound or after effect.」

Certainly Philuffy's tight and white back was charming, but that wasn't what Lux was feeling concerned about.

In the deadly battle in the Heiburg Republic, Philuffy said that the remaining

power of Yggdrasil's seed in her body was released.

She reinforced her body using a part of Yggdrasil that possessed the power of 『reinforcement』.

She even used a drastic move that applied it to even the Divine Drag-Ride Typhon that she was wearing.

Lux thought that she would be unable to return to battle for a while due to its after effects, but—

「That's right— We didn't tell Lux-kun but, Philuffy was treated a little while ago.」

「Treated.....? You say?」

Did a treatment to heal the backlash from Abyss transformation exist in this world?

「Do you remember about Ries Island? Kirihome Yoruka was imprisoned in the nearby solitary island. The hibernation pod she was sleeping in and the facility were something created from the Ruins. What's more—with those ancient technology it's possible to sleep without aging and even apply the surgery called Baptism.」

「.....」

「Since she sided with us, using her testimony, I estimated the location and brought what I discovered back to the Academy. Of course this time I asked for permission from the New Kingdom. And then after comparing and deciphering them with the material that Krulcifer-san brought, we activated the medical treatment system.」

「Since when, such thing—」

Just now, Magialca mentioned about Rosa's treatment, was it about this?

Indeed, it wasn't a good plan to let the combat force of the Seven Dragon Paladins to sleep with the threat of the remaining two Ragnarok.

The system was used on Philuffy and Rosa, then it seemed Yoruka's turn would be next, but it appeared that the reuse of the hibernation pod took time, so it was in the middle of waiting.

If it went well, Yoruka would also get healed in a few more weeks and then she would be able to fight again.

「Phi's body that was transplanted with a part of an Abyss could be healed to some degree using that. But, in the end, it's only the burden on the surface. But if, a healing device that is far more excellent than that pod is lying inside Avalon then—」

「Then it might be possible to perfectly heal even Philuffy's body!？」

Lux bit at Relie's words with a loud voice.

Because if Yggdrasil's seed that was taking root in the heart could be removed, that would be like something from a dream.

「I don't know, but perhaps, it's impossible to cure this completely. After all, a part of Phi's body already shares the same function. But, perhaps it will be possible to remove the majority of bad influence of the Abyss body part and the interference to the mind. She might be able to return to a body that is almost no different from a human in reality without getting influenced by a horn flute anymore—」

「I'm back.」

「-.....!？」

Philuffy who arrived bringing another helping of tea put a tray with cups on it on the table.

After that, she sat beside Lux and looked up at her big sister with a dissatisfied expression.

「I hate, Onee-chan.」

「Eh.....!？」

Philuffy told that with her usual bland tone and absentminded expression.

Relie who saw that went pale and made excuses.

「Yo, you misunderstand Phi, this is, you see, I was only talking about the possibility—」

「You promised, to not tell that to Lu-chan.」

「.....Err, Phi?」

- Puih*, Philuffy looked aside still with her blank face. Seeing that, Relie was sweating from her forehead and fell silent.

「Tha, that, then Onee-chan has work to do, so let's break up for now.....」

Like that she was showing an expression of despair while leaving the room.

Because Philuffy was stubborn despite her appearance, she must have guessed that anything she did would be pointless when it had become like this.

(Or rather, is it okay for the headmaster to leave the headmaster's office.....?)
Lux couldn't help but feel pity seeing that figure leaving with sunken shoulders while still wearing a witch costume.

「.....I brought, more tea.」

「Ah, right.....thank you.」

When Lux returned to his senses, Philuffy was giving him another helping of tea.

But, a few seconds later, Lux asked the thing that bothered him.

「That, can I ask what made you angry at Relie-san just now?」

「.....」

Philuffy was staying silent beside Lux in her rabbit costume with its high exposure rate.

「It's not like, I'm feeling it's painful or anything, you know?」

His childhood friend answered like usual with her own pace, expressionless face, and pure golden pupils.

「An Abyss is mixed inside my body, but I'm all right. I don't want Lu-chan to meet even more danger than this. I'll be many times happier, from being able to stay together.」

「.....」

This time it was Lux's turn to be speechless from Philuffy's words.

‘I see.’ He thought, he noticed the meaning of her exchange with Relie just now a bit late.

Relie didn’t say it directly but, she wanted Lux to pursue the possibility that Philuffy would be able to return to normal using the ancient technology of Avalon.

If he obtained great achievements as a Seven Dragon Paladin, the reward from the Lords would also increase.

The benefit of that ancient technology and legacy could be obtained through the New Kingdom, but if he could also become the central figure in the effort to reach Avalon, the right to be able to obtain a reward would increase.

Relie didn’t speak it clearly, but she was convinced that if she talked about it, then Lux would do his best to make it happen.

But—Philuffy didn’t want Lux to do reckless things in order to save her.

Previously, he tried to save Yoruka and almost lost his life.

She must have told Relie to not tell Lux about this matter so that he wouldn’t brave danger.

That was why, Philuffy was angry at Relie who was telling Lux about that while she was away from her seat.

「……………」

He understood Philuffy’s feelings.

He also understood the feelings of her who was always staying close to him and supporting him.

However—

「Phi-chan, make up with Relie-san later okay?」

Lux smiled quietly while saying that.

「Because, I’m happy being told that there might be a way that can heal Phi-chan’s body.」

「……………This is why, I didn’t want Lu-chan to know.」

Philuffy puffed up the cheeks of her expressionless face looking somewhat displeased.

「But, Phi-chan doesn't need to be bothered about it. Because, I'm happy that it's still possible for Phi-chan's body to get better. I can think that it's great I became a Seven Dragon Paladin just from thinking that.」

When Lux made a smile saying that, beside him, Philuffy softly pulled Lux's body closer.

She embraced Lux with a very natural but gentle movement.

「Lu-chan, hasn't changed.」

A voice that was fluffy like sweets tickled Lux's ear.

The sensation of breasts that were sweetly pressed on him caused his heart to beat fast.

But even that emotion was painted over by his feelings towards her that was filling his heart to the brim.

「Then, I will also fight again. This time for sure, so Lu-chan won't be too reckless.」

「Yes. Let's do our best together, Phi-chan.」

Even if it would be dangerous, he wanted her at his side. Lux's feeling when he gave her the sword belt for her Sword Device didn't change even now.

They treated each other as the foremost, and for the sake of the other they would even force themselves. From the beginning they didn't even think that they were forcing themselves.

They were fellow similar people in that aspect.

Lux's heart was healed just by being at her side like this just like when they were children.

It was mysterious that he didn't notice until now—no, actually he had noticed since the past.

That he was harboring an emotion that was more than simply being childhood friends or friends towards her.

The existence who saved him from solitude, the girl who became his first friend.

Him being a criminal of the Old Empire, and the feeling of indebtedness of being unable to save her caused him to keep down that feeling all this time, that was all.

(If I don't decide before the battle against Sacred Eclipse is finished.....) If Philuffy's body could be healed by the technology of Avalon.

If that feeling of indebtedness disappeared from Lux's heart.

At that time—

「.....Then, Phi-chan. Let's meet again at the Holy Night Festival.」

After spending nostalgic time for a while, Lux parted from Philuffy and exited the headmaster's room.

After telling Relie who was unsteadily wandering outside the room that Philuffy wasn't angry anymore, she returned inside while dancing boisterously.

「Even so, a hibernation pod on the island where Yoruka was sleeping huh..... Based on the situation, perhaps at first it was brought out from the Ark.」

It was Relie's achievement of bringing that Ruin's facility until the Academy, but a certain person should be involved with it to uplift it until a level where it was possible to be used.

Next he would head to where Krulcifer was at in the afternoon in order to say his thanks in regards to it.

The place was at the underground room of the Drag-Ride hangar.

He went to that place that was originally forbidden to enter.

Part 2

When he opened the door using the key he received from Headmaster Relie, a beautiful woman who was like a fairy turned around.

「What a shame. Even though Lux-kun finally visited me, we have to talk while standing in a place without elegance like this.」

The one who said that with a smile while brushing up her blue hair was the daughter of a count from the Ymir Theocracy, Krulcifer.

Right beside her was a metal box that was making working sounds *gogon.....*—the hibernation pod was shining.

From Lux's point of view, it was a huge coffin that was put diagonally.

The lid part was made from transparent glass so people outside could grasp the healing progress that was being done inside.

Similar to when Lux was injected with Elixir from Sacred Eclipse, he felt like there was something similar to that within the scene he witnessed.

「Thank you Krulcifer-san. For making it possible to use this.」

「Half of it is thanks to your little sister you know? She helped a lot with the deciphering of the method to use the simple parts, though the rough deciphering was done in the Hall.」

「I see.」

Lux nodded in comprehension.

Krulcifer's homeland, the Ymir Theocracy.

Inside the fourth Ruin, Hall, was an archive that existed there. She searched for the manual of how to use the hibernation pod there and translated it.

Krulcifer was a Key's Supervisor, and she was able to perform that feat by ordering the Ruin's Gear Leader, Ney Louches, but at the surface it was made to

look like Airi was the one who deciphered the manual.

The matter of the hibernation pod's discovery and its usability was also reported to the world alliance, Seven Dragon Paladins, and also the Lords, but the details of the process was concealed.

Due to the tense situation with Soffice who was managing the seventh Ruin, Moon, if it was exposed that Krulcifer was secretly contacting Ney, then they wouldn't know what kind of trouble it would bring.

And then, now that Philuffy's treatment was over, Heiburg's representative, Rosa Granhide was entering the pod for the sake of the coming battle, but—

「Can I ask you to not stare so hard at her nakedness? I have known already that Lux-kun is a boy without integrity though.」

「Yo, you're wrong, I'm not! That's, I wasn't looking because of such thought—!？」

Lux averted his eyes in panic after Krulcifer's mischievous whisper.

「Is that really true? Somehow it looks like the way you look at us recently has also changed after all.」

「.....」

He couldn't deny that.

Or rather, one reason for that was also because of the strong approach of the girls so he wanted to object, but it felt like he would be teased even more if he did that so he stopped.

There was no way Lux could win against Krulcifer in the exchange between man and woman.

「Then, let's leave the control of this place and go outside.」

「Is that alright?」

「Yes, they also came here for that, and this is a visit from you that is rare to come by, so it will be a waste to end it with only a talk inside this kind of underground.」

「They?」

「Your vigilance is insufficient there. Because it's you Lux-kun, I thought you would have noticed already but—」

「Ah.....」

Lux recalled something and turned around, at that moment sound came from outside the room.

(As I thought, it's the Triad.....)

Even while feeling half astonished, Lux thought that they would surely monitor this place while he and Krulcifer were away.

After they got out of the underground of the hangar following Krulcifer's recommendation, they set out to the city by making use of the after school time.

Part 3

「Somehow, it feels like it has been really long since the last time we walked in the city slowly like this.」

Lux along with Krulcifer watched the townscape wearing a coat above their uniform.

The fortress city with cross shape, Cross Field.

The first block was located in the center of it.

Even though he had walked here several times at his chore livelihood period, now it felt like it was different somewhere.

Was it because there were only two months left until the estimated world destruction?

Or perhaps, it was because for a while he was going around foreign countries and fought continuously?

The townscape that should be familiar to him felt really nostalgic.

「The New Kingdom is warm even though it's also winter. It helps that we don't need to wear thick clothes.」

Krulcifer wrapped a scarf around her neck while talking with an earnest tone.

Because she was coming and going from the New Kingdom to the Ymir Theocracy every week, she clearly understood the difference in weather between the two countries.

As expected, even with Fafnir that possessed top class mobility, it took time to come and go between countries even if it was less than a day.

Even Krulcifer who possessed overwhelmingly high Drag-Ride aptitude couldn't hold out if she didn't take a rest.

But even with that much trouble, Krulcifer said that she was glad she became

Mel's aide in the Ymir Theocracy.

「As expected, Krulcifer-san understands the difference well isn't it? Like the air of the Ymir Theocracy or something.」

「I guess. Until now I have never thought of such thing, but since I became closer with those people—being able to open my heart to my family, and becoming friends with Mel, with my butler Alterize, and also with the Automaton Ney Louches, I understood really well.」

She paused her words for a moment, and turned a smile that seemed warm towards Lux.

「I understood that the Ymir Theocracy, the house of Einvolk, they are my birthplace. I can feel that every time I fought, crossed the point between life and death, and returned alive. If I kept living under the impression that I am shunned by my family, surely—I wouldn't be able to feel like this.」

「I'm glad. It's great that Krulcifer-san can say that now.」

Lux showed a relieved smile at her words.

Then, Krulcifer smiled bewitchingly and brought her cheek closer to him.

「Why are you talking like it is someone else's matter like that? All of this is also thanks to your cooperation right? You know, every time I return home, Alterize is always noisy. She kept asking—『Actually how much have you progressed with him』.」

「That's because Krulcifer-san deceived everyone right!？」

Lux retorted in panic at Krulcifer's whisper that sounded like she was really enjoying it.

However, now after some time had passed since then, he understood the meaning of her words.

He understood that those weren't words that were simply a cover up for the search of a fiancée.

He understood that it was the wish of none other than Krulcifer herself.

「I guess you're right. However, for the time being there won't be any

progress in that front until two more months—until Sacred Eclipse is defeated. It's unfortunate, but after all it was me who first brought up about the pact to those girls.」

「The Triad also mentioned it but, what is that pact about?」

「—It's a secret. There are things that I cannot say even to you my benefactor. I made a promise with everyone else.」

How should he say it, he thought that Krulcifer was like always.

She was always teasing and leading Lux by the nose in a different form than the airheaded Philuffy.

But, mysteriously this ticklish rapport of his with her felt pleasant.

「That's why, right now I'm still going easy on you. But when the time comes, I'll get serious on you again.」

「That feels scary somehow, Krulcifer-san.」

Lux was trickling cold sweat at Krulcifer's smile that was filled with implication somewhere.

While he was walking on the street with a conflicted expression, a female shopkeeper with wide girth suddenly called out to him.

「Oh, isn't this Lux? What are you doing? You neglected guarding the princess and going on a date instead, even you cannot be underestimated eh.」

「Ah..... long time no see, missus.」

It was an auntie of a restaurant that also helped with the stocking up in the period of the Holy Night Festival.

Since Lux entered the Academy after chasing the cat that stole a pouch, he hadn't met her again, but—

「What are you saying? I have no plan to make you do any more chores. You protecting Cross Field and the New Kingdom as a Drag-Knight of Syvalles is far more important. More importantly, are you hungry? You are finally here so have something to eat.」

「.....Then, let me accept your kind offer for a bit.」

「Oo! This is a nostalgic face! Are you doing fine?」

When Lux entered inside the restaurant, a youngster of a farmer family who was sitting on a chair leaped up to his feet.

Next his coworker from a bar, then the son of a blacksmith who happened to pass through also called out to him one after another.

But, in contrast to Lux's expectation, they didn't ask him requests to do chores and only gave him words of thanks for his periodical great efforts.

「It can't be helped. I wonder if Lux-kun can let me experience your other birthplace too? I'll be happy if I can hear about the story from your chore livelihood period. I'm interested in stories like how Lux-kun wooed girls in a bar or the like.」

Krulcifer smiled with her eyes glinting sharply.

It seemed she was trying to acquire more material to tease Lux with.

「That, please go easy on me.....」

Lux smiled wryly. While together with Krulcifer, he was exchanging words with the nostalgic people he knew from the period when he was doing chores.

The days of the past when he spent his time doing chores and got recognized by the citizens.

The words of Krulcifer who said that it was his other birthplace remained in his ears.

Part 4

After spending peaceful time after so long, Lux parted with Krulcifer and headed to the government office building at the first block.

Following the list that was given to him by the Triad, he would visit Lisha next.

He didn't hear it directly from Lisha, but he heard that she was practicing here for her greeting at the New Year parade that would be held in the New Kingdom. It made him unable to sit still after knowing that.

Furthermore, this time it seemed there would be an attempt to decorate the government office building with Drag-Rides for the Holy Night Festival.

Lisha was checking the display items for the sake of the final tuning.

「Lisha-sama! Thank you for your hard work!」

Lisha was doing work on a high place by standing on a foothold that was constructed from wood material. Lux called out to her from right below.

Then, Lisha who was concentrating got taken aback and she turned towards him in hurry.

She was the Princess of New Kingdom with her red eyes that were like jewels and her blonde hair that was tied with a side tail style as her distinctive traits.

Her body build was small, but she was a girl who contained blazing enthusiasm inside like a sun.

Right now she was wearing her white coat that she often wore when developing Drag-Rides while performing tuning with a Sword Device in one hand.

「Lu, Lux-!? Why are you here—」

「I prepared dinner, so how about taking a breather? I also brought Lisha-sama's favorite apple pie.」

The basket that he asked the restaurant to prepare was filled with warm rock so the dishes wouldn't be cold.

But, it was still better to eat it while not much time had passed.

Thinking that, Lux called out to her loudly, but—

「Wai-, wait a second! No wait, as expected my current appearance is—uwah!?!」

She looked flustered about something while touching her own coat and face, after that she took a misstep and staggered from her foothold.

Lux who saw that quickly put down the basket and kicked on the floor in a dash.

Lisha was falling from the height of three or four ml. He splendidly caught her with both hands.

「Tsu.....!? O, oi Lux! Are you okay!?!」

「Yes, I'm fine. Lisha-sama yourself—」

「I, idiot! It's dangerous if you suddenly call out right!?! Besides you recklessly caught me like this, if you are injured—」

「I'm sorry about my voice. But, it's only natural for me to save Lisha-sama. Even like this, I am Lisha-sama's knight after all.」

When Lux smiled at Lisha while still holding her in his arms, the cheeks of the New Kingdom's Princess flushed red and she averted her face shyly.

「Good grief.....that's why this is no good. If you come showing your face suddenly, I can't help but getting shaken from happiness.」

「Eh.....?」

She muttered that with a low voice, so he was unable to hear the last part clearly.

「I, it's nothing-! More importantly, the meal. If I don't wash my hands—」

「I also brought a towel to wipe your hands with, here.」

He put down Lisha and picked up the basket, then they sat on a bench that

was a slight distance away from the workplace and they ate dinner together.

Vegetable soup with stock from meat and bone.

Sandwich with bacon and egg in between, apple pie as desert, and so on. After consuming those, they took a rest.

During that time, Lux stared at the Drag-Rides on display that Lisha was decorating and tuning.

「Is this, Lisha-sama's work for the Holy Night Festival?」

「Yeah, Haha-ue said that it will be a good symbol to convey my work to the people. She asked me whether I would be able to decorate the government office building with a Drag-Ride that I tuned.」

Lisha didn't only make conspicuous service as a Drag-Knight, but she was also known to produce results with Drag-Ride development.

Normally it couldn't be shown to the public to maintain secrecy, but this time new type Drag-Rides would be put on display as a special occasion.

「Well, it can't be helped. After all there is really nothing else that is princess like from me. Although, it also won't look very good if it's just a simple decoration, so I also applied the blueprint of ancient documents obtained until now and lined up things with unique shape.」



Lisha folded her arms looking proud.

In front of Lux, three types of general purpose Drag-Rides, the flying type, Wyvern, the land battle type Wyrn, and the special equipment type Drake were lined up.

「Eh.....? But this, their shape is different from normal?」

「As expected from my knight. You have good eyes.」

Lisha raised her voice in excitement at what Lux pointed out and bit at the topic.

「They are normal Drag-Rides that I remodeled into a special type. Something like this is also development, to be constantly progressing.」

「Is that so, as expected, it will be bad to display the combined Drag-Rides here.」

When Lux enrolled at first, Lisha was already developing the Chimeratech Wyvern that was the combination of flying type and land battle type.

Compared to that, the modification of these general purpose Drag-Rides wasn't really striking out. No, rather—

「Or rather, will they move properly? Somehow, rather than a single Drag-Ride, each of them looks like they are disassembled in various places—」

「They will. Besides, those three Drag-Rides are only models in the end. My 『new type』 that can be used in real battle is already placed in the underground of the Drag-Ride hangar.」

Guessing from her confident smile, most likely she had finished something absurd that surpassed that Chimeratech Wyvern.

These display items seemed to only line up the middle result of the progress until she reached that development.

「Well but, the truth is I'm quite reluctant..... Displaying my work like this.」

「Why?」

When Lux tilted his head, Lisha looked up at the Drag-Rides with a despondent look.

「After this, the New Kingdom will also raise taxes. Recruitment for soldiers is also inevitable with the recent consecutive battles, there is also the matter of compensation for borrowing soldiers from the Four Great Nobles. The increased amount of military spending cannot be avoided.」

「So this display is for the sake of convincing the people of that?」

「It wasn't Haha-ue—her majesty Queen Raffi who said it. Though I don't know if it was the suggestion of Prime Minister Nulph or the man called Zagha of the Four Great Nobles. The result of my research too, in the end it will be used for government promotion.」

The Drag-Rides of princess Lisha were lined up in display at the Holy Night Festival that was originally a solemn event.

The tax would be increased for the expansion of military spending, which would raise dissatisfaction and doubt from the people. For Lisha who had the thought of protecting the people of the kingdom at the forefront of her mind, this was a proposal for the sake of clearing up that negativity.

It might be correct to call this as making use of the Holy Night Festival for the sake of that.

It might be inappropriate for Lux to say it, but this was something that often happened when moving the country.

In fact the world was currently in danger right now, so it couldn't be helped.

「That is not a strange thing. In fact Lisha-sama is obtaining results in both research and also in battle.」

「I guess..... It's just as you say. However, well, with this kind of work behind the scenes as Princess, a simple and stupid girl like me is thinking like this. Is this, not a betrayal towards the people?」

Lisha looked at the Drag-Rides and murmured.

「If Lisha-sama is thinking until that far, then Lisha-sama is a splendid princess already.」

「I, is that so?」

「It's completely different with the Old Kingdom in the past. Besides, if that's

what Lisha-sama is thinking, it will be fine if you just don't act like that.」

Lux gave such advice to the wavering princess.

「I, is that so?」

「It will be fine if Lisha-sama conveys to everyone as much as possible what you are thinking about the present situation of the national politics. If you do that, surely her majesty and also everyone of Cross Field will understand.」

「I see..... You're right.」

After hesitating slightly, hesitation cleared up from Lisha's expression.

「Yosh! If that's decided, I'm giving it extra effort. My bad but I'll have you help out too!」

「Yes, it's my pleasure.」

Lux helped Lisha who had recovered her spirit and the tuning of the new type Drag-Rides for the display was finished.

In the first place, it was just choosing things and than putting them on display, so it didn't take much time.

Even though Lisha was in the middle of standby and this was 『a work as Princess』, but seeing that she was one of the few Drag-Ride researchers who existed, the New Kingdom didn't want to waste too much of her time with this.

After finishing the work, a coach came to pick them up, so they got on it and returned to the Academy.

Midway, Lux and Lisha were shook inside the coach while watching the night scenery of Cross Field that was decorated for the Holy Night Festival.

The people of this country didn't know about the danger of Sacred Eclipse.

But, the information that the Ruins were getting active and that the threat of the Abyss was heightening was circulated, and yet for the atmosphere to be this peaceful was solely thanks to the New Kingdom.

The New Kingdom military, Lisha, and many other people were protecting the country and secured safety, thanks to that the people could go through the Holy Night Festival safely like this.

Just that was enough for Lux to feel happy.

「It's a beautiful sight isn't it, Lisha-sama.」

「Yeah. But—I'm a bit dissatisfied here.」

「Eh.....?」

The cheeks of Lisha who until now looked like she was in a good mood were slightly puffed up and she leaked out her complaint.

「Why did you come visiting me in this kind of time huh? It's the truth that you helped me out but, that, if you came while I'm doing nothing, I will be able to keep you company after dressing myself properly, and yet—」

「.....」

「Isn't it unsightly when I'm drenched with sweat and oil like this.....」

Lisha averted her face shyly and caressed her own hair looking troubled.

‘I see.’ Lux thought. He understood the reason why Lisha was panicked when he called out to her first and she lost her footing.

From Lisha's point of view, she wished to meet Lux in a beautiful appearance at the time when there was no work related to Drag-Rides.

But, that was something completely irrelevant to Lux.

He wasn't bothered by the smell of oil and metal that were used for tuning Drag-Rides.

Even so Lisha was bothered with her own appearance that was like this while Lux was with her. That figure of hers who was like that was lovable.

「.....Fuah」

Lux reflexively reached out his hand and patted Lisha's soft blonde hair.

Then, Lisha's eyes snapped open in surprise and she looked up at Lux with a dazed expression.

「Lisha-sama isn't unsightly at all. The figure of Lisha-sama who is working hard as the Princess of the New Kingdom, is really lovely, and cool.」

That was Lux's unvarnished true feeling.

Just how many nobles and royalty out there who were only showing their good side to the public?

Just how many people where there like that, who he had seen when he was staying at the center of the Old Empire as a child?

There was nothing nobler than being able to work hard, getting dirty and injured for the sake of someone else when there was nobody else watching.

That was the ideal royalty that Lux wished to exist when his heart was pained by the Old Empire's despotic rule.

And such ideal could be seen in the current figure of Lisha.

「Eh? Lisha-sama.....?」

Lux became concerned when she didn't reply. Looking closer, Lisha's mouth was staying open with flushed cheeks looking dazed.

「.....That's, not true.」

After looking dumbfounded for a few seconds, Lisha came back to herself suddenly and gasped, then she continued her words.

「Even if, if you aren't by my side, I won't be able to have the courage to face the people of this country and everyone in the Academy as the New Kingdom's Princess. Even the Drag-Ride research, it was nothing more than an excuse for me to escape from the duty in front of me.」

Lisha spoke that to the finish and lifted up her face. She stared still at Lux's face.

「I became able to face myself as a princess..... was thanks to you. Because Lux, you supported me.」

「Lisha, sama.....」

「Say, Lux. Even when this fight is over, will you—.....no, it's nothing.」

Lisha suddenly was going to say something with a low voice and a vaguely lonely look, but she faltered.

After Lux stared at that with a serious face for a few moments, he nodded strongly and took the hand of this lovable small princess.

「I will accompany you till the end. Please rest assured, Lisha-sama.」

「I, I see.....wait, don't get too close. That's, because of the work, I'm smelly right now right?」

「Eh? It's all right, there is also a bit of sweaty scent but, it's a nice smell so—wait」

His tongue slipped.

It was already too late when he noticed that. Lisha's face went red like a boiled octopus and she raised her voice angrily.

「You're noisy shut up! A guy like you is just—!」

「I, I'm really sorry-!」

After receiving Lisha's eruption for a while, the laughter of two people resounded inside the coach.

The lighting of the city shining inside the night scenery was sparkling like jewels.

Part 5

「Lisha-sama is working really hard.」

After that, Lux who returned to the girl's dormitory changed into his room clothes and relaxed.

While he was going around visiting various countries as a Seven Dragon Paladin, during her exhausting work, Lisha wasn't just developing Drag-Rides, she was also making proactive effort as a princess.

She had no conspicuous achievement on the surface, but whether it was the strengthening of the Triad's Drag-Rides, or the repairing of Syvalles' members' Divine Drag-Rides, she was undoubtedly doing great efforts behind the scenes.

「I too shouldn't only pay attention to the outside, but I have to become Lisha-sama's strength as a knight too.....」

He thought that he was really able to serve an ideal master.

At the same time, he also noticed the fact that he was attracted in some level to her earnest figure.

『Say, Lux. Even when this fight is over, will you——.....no, it's nothing.』

「There is no way.....right?」

He felt like that heartfelt sentence of Lisha was also filled with another emotion.

That she wished him to be at her side supporting her forever from here on too.

But, if that wasn't just Lux's misunderstanding, then after they escaped this predicament and liberated Avalon, Lux would—

「.....Right now isn't the time for that.」

He lightly tensed his face in front of the mirror and fired up himself once

more.

Although right now the situation was like a short break, he mustn't let his mind wander too much.

He didn't know when this state of tension would be dissolved and they entered into a long deadly battle.

He had finished visiting the girls.

Yoruka who was heavily injured wouldn't be able to move for a while, but Celis, Philuffy, Krulcifer, and also Lisha-The girls who would become the cornerstone of the battle, their feelings were connected with him.

After that, there was only one thing that worried him in a sense but—

When Lux was absorbed into his thought like that, *knock knock* sound came from his door.

「'Sup Lux-chi, how's it going? The bath is empty y'know?」

「Thank you Tillfur.」

It was Tillfur of the Triad who brought that notification with a friendly voice.

Lux replied to her while showing his face from the room.

「So, have you talked with everyone?」

「Yes. I have also met with Lisha-sama, then there is only one person left I think.」

「I see, then great timing. I also have to tell Noct then.」

Tillfur made a suspicious smile that seemed to have hidden meaning.

When Lux made a puzzled face, Tillfur who read his expression answered him.

「You seee, Noct consulted with me for a bit just now. Since the previous battle, Airi-chan seems strange y'know. Like her heart is far away even though her body is here. Looks like she's got a lot on her mind.」

「Did, something happen?」

The traitor Key's Supervisor, Soffice Xfer, kidnapped Airi previously. After that, Airi returned safely but, she only said 『Nothing happened』 when she was asked

about the time she was taken away.

(Come to think of it, she was also worried when she found the list of the Holy Arcadia Empire.) Just as her external appearance suggested, Airi was a girl with a calm and smart head, but she was an exceptional worrywart when it was regarding her only family Lux.

(No, that's surely my fault I think.....)

From Lux's point of view, him being greatly busy doing chores was something normal, him getting dragged into something troublesome and meeting danger was also something that couldn't be helped for him in that situation.

But, from Airi's point of view, it only looked like because Lux was always being reckless that he almost died.

In reality it was exactly like that, there was no room for argument.

(But, just a bit more. Soon it will be over.)

In order to stop the world's destruction, he couldn't declare with certainty that he wouldn't be reckless anymore.

But, of course, Lux didn't plan to die and leave behind Airi by herself.

But, he had to have a heartfelt talk with her one more time for now.

Lux was thinking such thing while opening the door to the large public bath and entered.

When he went towards the washing place to shower with hot water and clean his body, he heard a sound from beside the large marble pillar inside.

「Eh.....?」

Strange.

Based on what he heard from the Triad, this time should be fully reserved for him, and yet...

(Don't tell me—an intruder?)

Lux immediately moved silently and held his breath.

Normally it would be impossible, but if by chance there was an assassin

aiming for Lux's life, then it was a different story.

There was enough possibility that Dragon Marauder or the like would aim for him who was the Seven Dragon Paladin of the New Kingdom.

In a sense Lux would always be together with someone else, but this bathing time was the short period where he would be alone and defenseless.

In fact, he left behind his Sword Device along with his clothes, so he would have no way to defend himself if he was targeted in this situation.

It would be a different story if it was Yoruka who could even use a single razor as a weapon but—

「.....Haa. It's already this late.」

At that time, he could hear a sigh from the opposite side of the pillar as though to back up Lux's conjecture.

Lux who caught that voice got taken aback and peeked at the situation on the other side.

(As I thought, there is someone! One person)

If he was going to fight in this situation, he could only take the first move quickly.

He had no other choice but to restrain the opponent's movements while they were searching for Lux.

(Yosh—)

After taking several deep breaths, Lux resolved himself.

With a towel in one hand to bind the hands of the enemy, he gradually approached the other side of the pillar.

Inside the steam that was like thick mist, that silhouette turned around to his way. In that instant, Lux moved.

「Don't move-!」

Lux intentionally raised his voice threateningly in order to take the enemy by surprise.

「——!?!」

Because he closed the distance and grabbed the opponent's arm, the true identity of the intruder became clear.

Glossy silver hair fluttered and clear gray eyes snapped wide open in shock.

That figure which looked like he was looking at a mirror for a moment—exposed beautifully white skin color.

「.....Eh?!」

「Wha, wha.....!?!」

Lux's thought crashed to a halt while his hand kept holding the girl's slender arm.

That person was no one else than Lux's little sister, Airi.

「——KYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!」

Less than ten seconds after she raised a shrill scream, sounds of multiple footsteps from several girls came running.

「What's wrong Airi-chan!? What happened!?!」

「.....N, no, I'm sorry for making a commotion. I slipped and almost fell, that's all. I'm fine now, I'm not injured or anything.」

Saying that, Airi sent away her classmates who entered into the public bath.

Lux was hiding inside the milky white hot water right nearby.

「It's fine already, Nii-san.」

「Puhah!!」

When Lux picked up his head from inside the hot water, Airi averted her blushing face.

「.....Please don't look this way. The next time you look, I will call people here for real.」

「Ah, right. Sorry.....」

There was no way for Lux to object after he had in fact looked.

Well, when Airi was still sickly, they often entered bath together, but as expected their figures now were different from the past.



Regarding the degree of her chest's bulge, it didn't look like that place had grown much but—

「I will drown Nii-san if you think of anything improper.」

「It's nothing at all.....」

How did she read Lux's heart even though she was turning her back to him?

Perhaps it should be said, as expected from a blood relative.

However, due to Airi's compassion, he somehow avoided the sentence of getting thrust out before the dorm mother.

「.....This must be Noct's doing. My translation work got dragged on for a bit, so I entered the bath alone this late.」

「I completely thought that an assassin or someone is sneaking inside.....」

「There won't be anything like that. Just what does Nii-san think your position is?」

When Lux told his excuse, Airi let out an exasperated sigh.

「That's, what do you mean.....?」

Lux asked while they were keeping their backs turned on each other.

Then, an answer that was completely unexpected came back.

「Recently, Nii-san's bathing time is monitored by the radar of Noct's Drake. After all it will be troubling if Nii-san is targeted while entering the bath alone and defenselessly with this fixed schedule.」

「Tha, that's what is going on?」

「Well, it was my personal request, but the headmaster has given permission. Besides Nii-san is too careless most of the time. Even though it's possible that spies like Saniya-senpai are sneaking into this Academy, what are you going to do without preparing any countermeasure for that?」

「Well.....you're, right.」

It seemed that Noct undertook the monitoring role in order to be alert of the enemy movement without stimulating the students by making the watch-

keeping not too exaggerated but—

「—Wait a second! Isn't that strange? Noct is noticing right now that Airi and I are together here right?」

It was Noct who didn't stop Airi who was late from taking a bath to enter here, and it was also her fellow Triad, Tillfur, who recommended Lux to enter the bath under such situation.

Even if, for example, there was a misunderstanding that occurred between them, if Noct searched with her Drake, she should have noticed this situation right now—

「That's why I'm angry. I have to reprimand Noct severely later—」

Behind him Airi was puffing up her cheeks, which he could easily imagine even without looking back.

In other words, this was surely the Triad's scheme.

Surely they meant Lux to ask the feelings of Airi who was worrying but wouldn't speak about it.

(Their method is absurd as always though.....)

Lux was exasperated inside his heart even while he tried to live up to their expectations.

After all Lux also wanted to ask Airi.

「Speaking about it, how is your condition recently Airi? I wasn't really here these few days because I was attending the New Kingdom's war council after all.」

「There is nothing particularly strange. I'm desperate to clean up after the incident that Nii-san caused as usual.」

「A, ahaha.....」

The conversation stopped completely after Lux laughed awkwardly.

Only the sound of water mixing and white steam rising marked the passing of time.

Although she was his little sister who had been together with him since they

were little, it felt a bit embarrassing to enter the bath together.

But at the same time, Lux also felt an odd sense of nostalgia.

Airi was sickly when she was little. She was a honest kid who was really clingy and spoiled towards Lux.

The older she got, she became a mature child with a clever mouth, but he believed that at the bottom of her heart she hadn't changed even now.

「That's, I really think it's my bad that I keep making Airi worry and fuss about my needs. When this battle is over, I will make it up to you for sure.」

「Nii-san is always treating me like a child like that, please stop it.」

When Lux tried to put her in a good mood, she immediately replied with sharp words.

Surely she was making her usual reproachful gaze right now.

「It's not like I'm wishing Nii-san to do anything more for me than right now.」

「I, I see, that makes me feel a bit lonely though—」

When Lux smiled wryly while feeling a bit shaken up, Airi immediately denied it.

「That's not it. That's not what I mean. What Nii-san has done for me is already more than enough. Originally we, who were in the position of imperial family members, are existences that the people of the New Kingdom would ostracize. In order to improve our position, I conducted myself sociably and worked hard in deciphering the Ruins' ancient documents. But—Nii-san formed communication with everyone, you clashed with them, reached understandings with each other, and got recognized by everyone.」

「That's, a coincidence. It's not just me, everyone is also good people who treated me well, and it's also thanks to Airi who is staying in the Academy—」

Lux scratched his head and spoke with an embarrassed tone.

But, Airi continued her words with a quiet voice that sounded detached just like before.

「That's why—it's the opposite. I'm not asking for anything from Nii-san, it's

painful that I cannot do anything. I, who doesn't have the stamina and technique to wear a Drag-Ride, cannot be of any help even in this situation where the New Kingdom is cornered to the wall. Even though I want to fight if that means I will be able to fight Nii-san with my own strength.....」

「Airi.....」

She had changed, but actually not.

All this time since that time until now, Airi was a little sister who was thinking anxiously for Lux's well being.

Lux's heart was struck by the pure feelings of his only remaining family.

Just that feeling of hers was enough.

For what was he fighting? As long as that was clear, he wouldn't hesitate.

「I also said this before but, I can fight because Airi is waiting for me. When you were kidnapped to the Moon before this too, my heart was gripped by terror. That's why, it's fine for you to stay like this. Because you can be my strength like this even more than fighting together with me.」

「Haa.....Nii-san is always talking sweetly to girls like that. Just what are you going to do about the future? The management of the female students giving presents to Nii-san at the Holy Night Festival, if I don't take care of it, it will become a disaster you know?」

When Airi who submerged herself inside the bathtub until her shoulder turned around, she said that to him with an exasperated gaze.

Since when it became like that he wondered.

The event that Relie said she would hold felt somewhat scary now.....

「A, and that's why, because I'm an unreliable big brother like this, please take care of this incompetent me.」

「.....What a hopeless Nii-san. You won't be able to do anything without me here.」

When Lux pleaded with a wry smile, Airi also smiled and jokingly made an air of importance.

The siblings enjoyed a nostalgic family time.

Part 6

Because it would take time to change clothes, Lux got out of the bath first.

It was only for a few minutes, but Airi who was left alone engrossed herself in her thought.

In the end—she was unable to say her true trouble to her big brother.

She couldn't let Lux do anything dangerous more than this.

In the previous battle, after she was kidnapped to the seventh Ruin Moon, she was approached with a certain deal from the Seven Dragon Paladins traitor Soffice.

—

『There is a way to end this battle bloodlessly. Even though you might not be aware of it, but you are holding the key for that. The next time we call on you, I want you to comply with us.』

After the battle the other day, the black haired girl with a red tattoo on her face told Airi that.

Thinking how she asked Dragon Marauder to steal the Grand Force that the New Kingdom entrusted to Lisha, she should be an enemy without a doubt.

『It might be a betrayal to the New Kingdom from you. But—thinking about the world, this should be the best thing to do.』

The Key's Supervisor Soffice, and the Moon's Automata Re Plica who introduced herself as Soffice's little sister Uruk Septy were showing an intention to save the world in their own way.

—

『If you betray us later, I will activate the Moon's function—the ^{Bell of the Crazy Moon} Lunatic Call, gathering all the Abyss and Ragnarok and destroy the New Kingdom. Your big

brother will naturally die. If you are fine with that, then you can refuse this deal.』

—

They didn't trust the world alliance and also the Lords. They planned to liberate Avalon by themselves.

At present, they threatened all the countries with the weapons of the seventh Ruin Moon and the remaining Ragnarok, but amidst that Airi was holding the key for their plan.

From here on it was just Airi's personal conjecture, but most likely installing a Grand Force and liberating the Ruins could only be done by the Arcadia family.

In other words, she was told to give the last push for them to be able to obtain Avalon.

They said that they wouldn't do anything bad to her as long as she kept her promise to cooperate with them.

If she betrayed them, they would order the Ragnarok using the Moon's functions to destroy the New Kingdom.

But naturally, in case they had evil purpose in their scheme to rule over the world, it would be Airi's push that became the cause of the end of everything.

Even so—when Airi almost committed suicide, they let her go without doing anything to her.

—

『If possible I don't want to kill a little sister. In the past, inside that Garden, my important little sister—Uruk was tricked and torn limb from limb. I don't want to do the same thing like those traitors.』

—

Of course, she also couldn't deny the possibility that Soffice words were just a made up story.

After all, in negotiations it often happened that the talk progressed smoothly not just by pushing, but also by pulling back sometimes.

Prompting cooperation by showing compassion and understanding to the cornered Airi.

There was more than enough possibility of that.

Even after taking that into consideration—Airi decided to comply with their deal.

She didn't think that it was right.

If her action was found out, she might be given the death penalty in the New Kingdom.

For the time being, she had to skillfully probe for their objective before Avalon was liberated.

「My battle, is from here on.」

Although she couldn't divulge it to anyone, but the other day a letter from them arrived for her. Inside it was written that the promised time would soon arrive.

Airi exited the large public bath and changed into her uniform, then she signaled Noct who was wearing Drake at a blind spot of the school building.

After Noct stopped using her radar and joined up with Airi, Airi complained about how the Triad brought Lux inside the bath, and then in the end she said that she recalled she had a business to take care of, so she wanted to be alone for a while.

She said that she had business in a hidden room where students were forbidden to enter.

「Yes. I will wait in our room, so Airi, please be careful to not catch a cold.」

The Academy's surrounding was protected by security Drag-Knights so there was no problem.

Magialca of the Seven Dragon Paladins was also staying at the Academy as reinforcement, but she had confirmed that she had a drinking bout with Relie and she had drunk herself dead drunk.

With this, there wouldn't be any hindrances.

She had swiped the entrance key at noon when Syvalles's members were coming and going.

Airi headed towards the fourth Drag-Ride hangar that should be empty already.

Episode 3 – Two Dragons Under The Moonlight

The fourth Drag-Ride hangar existing in Academy.

There were important facilities for Drag-Rides and archives in the underground room, but there was nothing on its high rooftop.

There was only an excessively spacious rectangle space spreading, surrounded by low walls.

Airi was standing on that place where it was forbidden to enter, exposing her body to the cold night wind.

It was a high place inside the Academy where the moon could be clearly seen.

That was the place where she was arranged to meet Soffice Xfer for the deal of cooperation.

Just as promised, there was no one around the hangar.

She didn't tell anyone about this matter.

「Even though I've just entered the bath, now I'm feeling chilly again like this.」

「—Then, we're going to finish the talk quickly. I'm also cold.」

「.....-!?!」

When Airi grumbled like that because there was no one around, a voice suddenly came from behind. Airi's breath was caught in her throat from shock.

When she turned around, a brown skinned girl—Soffice Septy, now Soffice Xfer was standing wearing a pilot suit with high exposure rate and the Divine Drag-Ride Vritra.

「Since when.....」

「I haven't waited that long. However, we both don't have much time from here.」

She must mean that there was a high risk they would be discovered if they stayed here for too long.

However, there was no impatience in Soffice's expression. She was simply continuing to talk with a bland tone without inflection.

「Was it Vritra's Divine Raiment that caused your figure to be unseen until now?」

The saffron colored Divine Drag-Ride, with gradation that was like a blazing flame on its armor.

Airi asked while staring at its strange curving form, but Soffice was curt.

「I cannot answer that. After all I'm a secretive woman.」

「.....」

It felt like that answer itself was a positive confirmation to her question, but Airi didn't retort.

Airi was scared of her when they first met because of the tense situation, but unexpectedly she might be an interesting girl.

「There is one thing to confirm. You will enter the Garden with me after this, install the Grand Force, liberating the Ruin. I estimate we will return in just a few hours, is that okay?」

「Wai-, please wait! The remaining two crystals should still be inside the Ragnarok, what will you do about that?」

Airi intentionally asked in the middle of her conversation with Soffice to draw out as much information as possible.

She was surprised that Soffice planned to liberate the Garden so suddenly, but if Garden's Ragnarok had been defeated—or if perhaps there was a simple method to defeat it, there would be nothing better than to know that fact.

Because that might become an opening for Lux and the others to take advantage of.

「That is.....—!?!」

When Soffice was going to reply with her expressionless face, her blank eyes opened wide.

Right after that, Soffice and Vritra leaped to the side with a speed that the eye couldn't follow.

「.....!?!」

A moment later, it was Airi's turn next to be shocked.

The wall surrounding the hangar's rooftop in four direction was low, so Soffice would fall if she moved like that—just when she thought that, Soffice and Vritra hovered still in the air.

「.....Negotiation breakdown. It's unfortunate, but my wish doesn't come true.」

Soffice wearing Vritra muttered while hovering still as though stepping on empty air.

Wire Tail was wrapping around her body. She was restrained by another Drag-Ride.

「Why are you here, upstart conglomerate captain?」

「Eh.....!?!」

Airi who heard Soffice's muttering followed her gaze and saw that.

Without her noticing, an orange haired girl wearing a Divine Drag-Ride of vivid cherry blossom color was standing on the rooftop in confrontation with Soffice.

Magialca Zen Vanfrick.

The head of the Vanfrick Company that had the world under its thumb, the multi-millionaire girl who served as the captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins.

—No, she was a woman of undetermined age with only her appearance looking young, but she was standing wearing a fearless smile.

Her body was wearing tight and smallish pilot suit with her usual coat above it.

Even for Airi, this was her first time seeing Magialca's battle readiness.

However Airi was bewildered not only because Magialca suddenly appeared on the rooftop where there were only her and Soffice.

(That Divine Drag-Ride, what in the world—!?)

The shape of the Drag-Ride Magialca was wearing, it was just too different with everything Airi had seen until now.

First, it was so big that it occupied a fifth of the space of the spacious Drag-Ride hangar's rooftop.

Furthermore this Drag-Ride had no legs.

Huge multiplex armor that only consisted of upper body wasn't directly wrapping Magialca's body.

It was only showing its figure like a guardian god standing behind her.

The huge armor that covered around Magialca in semicircle shape gave the impression like a Drake, but the seven masts protruding from that frame were endowed with terrific mass and sense of intimidation.

It was as though it was an army of one.

The Drag-Ride that should be just one unit was boasting a majestic appearance that gave the impression of a group of Drag-Knights forming a formation of heavy armored troops.

「It was a pain to hide this figure you know? After all, once this armor is deployed, this thing won't be able to move. And so it seems I'm late for the introduction huh—traitor.」

「.....Searching the Moon's database. So that is the special equipment type Divine Drag-Ride, Jormungandr.」

「I'm sorry that I was unable to show my fight until now despite being the captain. But, even like this I'm someone with a strong sense of responsibility. I came in order to clean up after my subordinate. If you surrender, then the sentence for your crime will be light, how about it?」

Magialca jerked her chin with a challenging smile.

「Crime? I'm not betraying anyone. Since the start, I'm only fighting for my own sake.」

Soffice who was restrained by Jormungandr with a thick and long Wire Tail replied like that with a chilly tone.

「I see, then this is breakdown of negotiations. The crime of rejecting my deal is heavy you know?」

「.....」

Magialca put on a wicked smile, then stinging air of tension drafted to the surroundings.

But, at that time when the fierce battle after this was assumed would happen, Magialca's gaze suddenly turned towards Airi.

「Sorry that I'm late, Lux's little sister. Erasing the presence of this Divine Drag-Ride and deploying it is a bit hard you see.」

「N, no.....bu, but how? Magialca-san should be sleeping at the headmaster's place—」

「That is the disguise of my aide. The male who is my butler called Lolotte, he is still a young boy (child) but his skill is good, and he also looks good in female clothing.」

Airi was somewhat creeped by the jesting Magialca while questioning her further.

「No, more importantly, how did you notice about me and her—」

「Who do you think I am? By the point of time you were kidnapped once by the Moon's fellows, it was only natural to investigate if there is something. From the particulars until now, I thought that perhaps they might use you to liberate the Ruin, and it seems that I'm right on the spot.」

「.....」

Airi gulped hearing Magialca's deduction. At that moment, Soffice's Vritra that was hovering midair suddenly moved silently.

Three Daggers that were casually taken out were thrown towards Magialca.

Then Vritra flew following behind those Daggers.

「-.....!？」

- Vun!* Along with that sound of cutting through air, Vritra flew with the wire restraining it.

—Fast.

Airi didn't even have time to let out her voice when the Daggers were approaching before Magialca.

Jormungandr's huge arm swung in a flash and deflected them, then the second armored arm pulled back and clenched its steel fist.

It seemed like an installation type of Divine Drag-Ride that took root on the ground while only possessing upper body, but its seven arms were equipped with all sorts of weapons, so it could be seen how it possessed diverse methods of attack.

Airi was going to think, as expected from Philuffy's master, but it seemed that the Drag-Ride didn't have function like Pile Anchor to reel in the enemy closer.

But, when Magialca who was clad in huge armor made a stance, Jormungandr that was standing tall behind her also synchronized its movement as though tracing her stance.

The arm drew an arc, from the stance of defense it moved in order to launch an intercepting fist.

The straight thrust that was unleashed from there with the whole body's power directly hit Vritra.

「— Authority of Wind
Mahapurana」

「.....!？」

But, right after the terrific impact pierced the air, Magialca's expression turned forbidding.

The armor fist that was like a giant rock came to a stop before Soffice.

「Is that Vritra's Divine Raiment? It's not a barrier that caused my fist to stop

reaching further. My fist shouldn't be that soft.」

「There is no ground for negotiation with you. My bad, but die here.」

Soffice didn't answer Magialca's question.

But as though in exchange for that, she aimed a medium sized Cannon at her.

「Do you think you can smash my Jormundgandr's barrier with that kind of peashooter? Once this Drag-Ride is installed in place, it won't be able to be moved easily, but in exchange it boasts overwhelming power for offense and defense.」

The weapons of the seven arms that were placed on its back rumbled and they were tinged with faint light inside the darkness.

There were two arms that were barehanded, one arm that from its wrist became a rapid-fire gun type, one sword type arm, one cannon type arm, one box that was packed full with Daggers, and the last one, a long cylindrical thing that became Wire Tail which was wrapping around Vritra.

Each of the huge seven armored arms became weapons that was exemplary of a Drag-Ride.

「I—don't have free time to hold worthless talk with you.」

Soffice didn't even show any signs of fear against those and whispered that. In that moment, Airi was taken aback with surprise.

The Daggers that Soffice threw before this and which Magialca should have deflected were flipping over, and then they flew towards Magialca like bullets from behind her.

「.....-!?」

Magialca immediately reacted. She swung six arms and struck them down.

Instantly, Soffice fired her medium sized Cannon, sniping at Magialca who was protected by an armored wall.

—Thunderous sound, and flash burst.

「Ah.....!」

When the smoke from the explosion cleared up, Airi was being held on her

waist by Vritra's arm.

Vritra was bound by Wire Tail. It should be unable to move properly.

And yet, Airi floated in the air and getting pulled toward Soffice. She was caught.

「As expected, it seems its defense is hard because of its huge size. But, the match is decided already.」

Soffice who was showing a blank expression moved Vritra's armored arm and put a knife on Airi's neck.

Magialca was unperturbed by the attack on her, but Airi was taken hostage.

「I see. As expected, Vritra's Divine Raiment is control of trajectory that manipulates movement isn't it? Evading my fist, and pulling Airi towards you from a distance. It has a power to freely move the things you designate as a target. But, it doesn't look like it is able to do it for several things at once.」

Magialca smiled while tapping her head *kon kon* with her index finger.

But, Soffice ignored the opponent's conjecture and stated her demand.

「Is there any meaning from you noticing that? Undo the Wire Tail holding my Vritra, if not—」

「Yes, you cannot use it to more than one target at the same time. The reason why you didn't undo that binding also lies in there. If you use your Divine Raiment to undo the Wire Tail, you won't be able to stop my attack with the trajectory control.In other words it's just as I thought, my Jormungandr's fire power is able to break through your barrier without difficulty.」

「.....」

Soffice's countenance didn't change at the slightest hearing that.

But, seeing how she didn't immediately try to move hinted that Magialca's guess was correct.

「You cannot escape without undoing the Wire Tail, but if you use your Divine Raiment for that, you won't be able to block my attack. Thus you took that girl hostage, creating a shield so I cannot attack. Isn't that right?」

「You are intentionally explaining like that to buy time.」

Soffice responded with a cold smile at Magialca's provocative smile.

「The Drag-Knights of the Academy will soon rush here because of the Cannon's explosion just now.....my bad, but—I won't let you.」

The next moment, Vritra's armor was tinged with light and the Wire Tail tying it up was loosening by itself.

The trajectory control of the Divine Raiment Mahapurana was undoing the binding.

In order to erase the opening from her doing that, Soffice moved the arm that was holding Airi and put her in front.

「—!?」

Used as the enemy's shield, Airi's body stiffened with nervousness.

For Vritra that was a flying type Divine Drag-Ride, it would be able to escape to the sky if only the wire was taken off.

Jormungande was an unprecedented installation type gigantic Drag-Ride, so it wouldn't be able to pursue if Vritra flew away.

It was unthinkable that Magialca would attack without hesitation. Airi was at a loss of how she should act.

But—that unthinkable became reality.

「I see, you are quite quick-witted. But—that's naïve.」

「What?」

When Soffice made a bewildered expression, Jormungandr's gigantic head was gathering energy.

- Crackle crackle* Light of energy was forming a vortex and it was fired as a dragon's roar.

「—Howling Roar!」

「Li, es.....!?」

Regardless of Airi being used as shield, a vortex of shockwave that was several times more powerful than normal Howling Roar was approaching near.

It might be a different matter if Airi was wearing a Drag-Ride, but with her flesh body, this attack was something that would definitely injure her beyond help.

(—!? Nii-san!)

The moment Airi closed her eyes tightly and prayed, her body was pulled back.

「Eh.....?」

When Airi opened her eyes in bewilderment, Soffice who should be using Airi as a shield was pulling her behind Vritra—hiding her behind a barrier.

But, the shockwave couldn't be fully defended by the barrier and Vritra was blown away from the hangar's rooftop.

Airi's body was losing the sensation of gravity.

「.....Of course you will do that. After all, if this little sister dies, you won't be able to liberate Garden. You won't be able to fulfill the objective that you want to accomplish so much you will even brave through danger for it. After knowing that—using her as shield won't even become a bluff.」

「.....-!?」

Airi was shuddering inside her heart hearing Magialca talk as though she had seen through everything right from the beginning.

The vice captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Singlen, possessed overwhelming power as a Drag-Knight, but this Magialca read the opponent's tactic.

She saw through the enemy instantly and then she took advantage of the opening without any hesitation.

She wasn't just reading the opponent's ability and breathing as a fighter.

Her power of bargaining and discernment as a merchant.

In that sense, she was undoubtedly in possession of ability that was worthy as

captain.

Magialca grinned in a way that showed wickedness from the bottom of her heart and she moved both her arms. Jormungandr traced that motion and took a stance for pursuing attack.

The giant dragon on her back tensed its arms creakingly in combination with its user's movement, and threw a crushing blow towards Soffice.

The enormous armored arm that was like the mast of a sailing ship launched a vertical down strike with its weight riding behind it.

Right after the launching of that attack which would definitely deal great damage if it hit directly, Soffice's eyes shined in response.

Adamantine Mallet
「—Vajra」

Right after that, a pillar of light was falling down through the cloudy sky.

A brilliant lightning strike cut through the jet black darkness vertically and directly hit Jormungandr.

「—Ku!」

Even Magialca couldn't fully block it with her barrier and she grimaced.

(Just now, don't tell me—)

Airi who saw that immediately judged the situation.

She concluded that most likely it was Vritra's special armament or something, aiming at Magialca from the sky.

But, that was all that Airi could confirm.

Airi who was separated from Vritra and got blown away from the edge of the rooftop was free falling from a height of more than 10 m. A fate of unavoidable death was imposed on her.

—Despair.

Airi was imagining a fruit that fell on the ground and went splat while hugging her own body, at that moment her body floated gently in the air. She could hear the voice she was wishing for.

「—Airi-!」

「Nii-san-!?!」

Her eyes snapped open at the familiar voice of her big brother, immediately after that the body of the falling Airi was carried off by a huge black dragon.

Without pause it flew horizontally and landed on the ground. Airi was put down on the nearby grassy ground.

「Why, is Nii-san here—?!」

「Let's talk later. Right now we have to do something about that Soffice—」

Lux didn't relax his focus and stared intensely at the battle situation where two dragons were striking at each other.

Lux was able to come with great timing was because of the Dragon Voice communication from Magialca.

Lux reacted to the sound above the Drag-Ride hangar and put on Bahamut, then right after that a voice suddenly came to him from Magialca.

『Your little sister will soon fall from the hangar's rooftop. Pick her up if you don't want to lose her』, she said.

The special equipment type Divine Drag-Ride Jormungandr had a great range of Dragon Voice.

Thus, she was able to tell Lux the strategy from a range where Soffice hadn't noticed him yet.

The strategy went as planned until there, but right after Lux was able to help Airi safely, a single hesitation sprouted inside Lux.

「.....-u」

The armor of Vritra that was struck down from the hangar was already dispelled.

Soffice already lost consciousness from Jormungandr's full power strike and shockwave from above.

「—Lux, move away from there. I'll finish her off.」

Magialca in her pilot suit leaped down from above the hangar.

The installation type Jormundgandr was already called off, but her hand was holding a short sword type Sword Device.

「—Please wait!」

But, Lux also called off his armor and stood on Magialca's way.

「What? Are you intending to cover for the bandit who threatened your little sister's life?」

Lux didn't back down even after Magialca said that.

「We cannot kill her here. You should know the reason why better than me.」

「What do you mean by that my sweetheart? Right now, the one who is using three Ragnarok, including Sacred Eclipse, as a threat and make the world an enemy is that girl there you know? There is no doubt about whether she should live or die.」

「No, there is. After all, among the traitors, there is the Automaton Gear Leader, Re Plica who is still staying behind in the Moon even now. If something happens to Soffice—」

「She might be desperate and self-destruct you mean? Well, certainly it's as you say.」

Magialca sheathed back her Sword Device as though she had understood that right from the start.

And then, she entered the hangar and brought back a rope. She tied Soffice with that.

「Then for now it's torture. I'll make this girl talk of everything she knows. I'll also negotiate with the Automata of the Moon to make an opening.」

「About that— for now can I ask you to put it on halt?」

「Why? You, don't tell me she is your type?」

Lux responded with seriousness to the end even against Magialca's teasing tone.

「From my view, she doesn't simply look like a bad person. You should have

seen it yourself. She tried to save Airi without even thinking about herself.」

「.....」

Airi held her breath in surprise hearing what Lux pointed out.

She had an idea about what he was saying.

First, Soffice covered her from the powerful shockwave of Jormundgandr's Howling Roar.

And then, the second was when she was falling.

After hitting Magialca with a counter from Vajra that seemed to be Vritra's special armament, she tried to save Airi using the Divine Raiment of trajectory control.

That was why for a moment Airi's body floated in the air.

The battle itself ended in Magialca's victory, but if Soffice forsook Airi right from the start, the result might be different.

At the very least, it might be possible for her to escape.

「That sounds painful to my ears, I didn't desert your little sister or anything you know? For these traitors to liberate the Ruins, they need the bloodline of the Arcadia's family which is you guys. That was exactly why your little sister was kidnapped the other day.」

「.....So you noticed? No—so there is no mistake about that?」

There was a high possibility that only the family members of Arcadia could insert the giant crystals, Grand Force, into the Ruins.

Airi had never heard anyone saying that clearly or seeing it written in a document.

It was nothing more than Airi's conjecture from everything that happened until now.

And so Airi asked that question once more, to which Magialca nodded.

「It's not like I have confirmed it, but there is almost no doubt about it. It appears those Lord bunch intentionally keep quiet about it though. Am I wrong, little sister?」

Saying that Magialca folded her arms proudly.

Airi who had that pointed out could only nod in affirmation.

「Well, if we torture this girl we will be able to obtain proof about that. Now, hand her over.」

「I think, it's still too early to make that judgment.」

But, Lux rejected Magialca's suggestion.

「She won't be able to fight for a while with her injury. She shouldn't be able to do anything if we just take away her Sword Device.」

「That's an irrelevant statement for someone intelligent like you. So what? Certainly it might be dangerous to kill her right away. But, there is every reason why we have to torture her to make her spit out information as long as she doesn't die from it, right?」

Just as Magialca said, there were a lot of things they wanted to ask Soffice.

But, Lux was reluctant to torture her for that before casting her away in the end.

「However I—don't want to do something like hurting her when she is powerless. First we should talk to each other, and then if possible we should try to persuade her. That's what I think.」

「.....Haa」

‘^{yare,yare} Good grief’, like that Magialca shrugged her shoulders and sighed.

Her sigh that was dyed white from the cold melted into the darkness and vanished.

「You are just like always. It should be fine to not show that much mercy to an enemy.」

「Even if she is trying to use Airi in order to liberate the Ruins, she shouldn't be trying to save her to the point of risking her life for it. Please let me persuade her. Perhaps I might be able to do that if we talk to each other.」

After Lux requested once more, silence visited for a while.

Then, perhaps hearing the commotion of the battle just now, the guards of

the Academy were arriving in front of the hangar.

「There is nothing serious. The enemy has already left. You all return to your posts and keep a lookout.」

Magialca said that and sent away the guards, after that she turned towards Lux once more.

「As the captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins, I can also turn down your request, but it looks like I'll get hated if I do that.」

Magialca formed a somewhat obscenely wicked smile.

「Whether we are going to torture her or not, as long as this girl is kept in the Academy, it will be accompanied with the traitors attacking. Then using her instead as hostage against the lot in the Moon and negotiating is also one way.」

「Then.....」

「Yeah, I'll entrust her to you. She is a dangerous existence whether alive or dead, but let's try pulling out anything usable from her as much as possible. But the time limit is one week, at the next morning after the end of that Holy Night Festival. If you cannot persuade her until then, I will use her to threaten the lot in the Moon. And also, if you cannot obtain any important information until then, I'll have you take responsibility too.」

「.....I, understand.」

Even this was Magialca giving her compromise until the limit.

After Lux nodded, Magialca talked about arranging for a prison in the hangar's underground and went to Relie's place.

After it was only Lux and Airi left, Airi finally spoke.

「Is it okay, Nii-san? It might be strange coming from me but, she is dangerous. If she escapes, or we allow the enemy to rescue her, the Academy and the New Kingdom will—」

Be the first one to be targeted, and at that time they would be done in for sure.

「That's right, however, either way we have to question her, there is no other

way. Though I'm making Airi worried again like this.」

「Good grief, Nii-san is still doing it even knowing that much. Nii-san's liking for girls is really beyond help.」

「Wai-, don't interpret this strangely like that. I'm just—」

「I know. There is no way I won't understand Nii-san's thinking.」

「Eh.....?」

‘Fuu’, Airi slipped out a small sigh and looked up to the jet black night sky.

「Being made as the bad guy just because of a difference in standpoint, we are also the same like that. The feeling of wanting to at least listen to the other side's story, I can understand that.」

「.....」

That's right.

Right now they could be accepted by the New Kingdom like it was nothing, but in the past, Lux was also on the enemy's side from the viewpoint of the people.

「Besides, I also had my life overlooked twice by her. That's why, I'm thinking to talk to her about that too. At that time, after I was kidnapped to the Moon, something did happen—」

Lux heard the story from Airi during the time they were waiting until the preparations for the underground prison was finished.

How Soffice was together with Dragon Marauder in the Moon.

How Soffice was trying to use Airi as the key to liberate the Ruins.

How it seemed she lost her little sister in the past inside Garden.

How she was calling Lux and the others, those of the Arcadia lineage as a family of traitors.

And then, how she was thinking that her reaching Avalon would be for the sake of the world.

In any case, it would be difficult to draw out information and persuade her

within one week.

But, if they didn't do that, what would be awaiting after that would be killing each other.

「It's an honor to meet you Lux-sama, Airi-sama. I am called Lolotte, Magialca's secretary and bodyguard.」

Right after Lux finished hearing Airi's story, a young boy with small build wearing butler uniform appeared and greeted them.

He was a young boy with thick and short brown hair, baby face, and gentle demeanor.

It seemed that he wasn't appointed as an aide because he didn't really have aptitude for Drag-Rides, but it appeared he was acting as Magialca's close associate.

After Airi was kidnapped to the Moon the other day, Magialca ordered him to monitor the Academy, and in order to trick the vigilant Soffice, he disguised himself as Magialca this time and stayed at Relie's place.

After exchanging a bit of greeting, Magialca and Relie arrived.

「I got permission from Relie and finished the preparations. There is not enough hands for the transport. You two need to help out too.」

「.....Understood.」

Following Magialca's instruction, the five of them entered the underground of the Drag-Ride's hangar and sneaked into the hidden room inside.

Because the hangar itself was a place for storing Drag-Rides, guard Drag-Knights were also guarding the place, so the enemy wouldn't be able to approach easily.

It was decided that it would be more relieving to hide Soffice here rather than in the Academy.

「Then, I will come for the negotiation after the Holy Night Festival. If there is anything you can do, then do it before then.」

「Yes. I'm grateful for your consideration.」

After confining Soffice in the underground, Lux parted with Magialca.

Soffice who was sleeping and unmoving had shackles put on her. Lux and Airi would watch her in turns.

「Then, good night for today. Airi too, good work today.」

「.....Wait, is Nii-san planning to sleep here!?!」

He asked the headmaster to lend him a sofa and blanket, so today Lux decided to sleep in front of the stone prison where Soffice was confined.

「Because I have responsibility more or less. If by any chance we let her escape, that will be the end for us.」

Well, a fireplace was also prepared in the room where Soffice was at, but speaking frankly, it was cold outside the room.

However, he also couldn't light up a fire in the passage in front of the prison, so Lux could only endure it.

The underground of the Drag-Ride's hangar was basically forbidden for students to enter, but even inside it there was a door that was further locked strictly.

There were four prisons behind that door that was used in the era of the Old Empire. Lux put an old sofa in the passage that was connecting to those prisons and he would be sleeping there.

「Haa..... I understand. Please don't die no matter what. Right now is the middle of winter you know?」

「I'll be careful. Then, good night Airi.」

「Rest well, Nii-san.」

Airi talked with an exasperated tone at the end and she left.

The prison's door was closed, but there was a gap opened for monitoring the prisoner. He could confirm Soffice's figure from there.

It seemed she only fainted without anything endangering her life.

Both her legs and arms were fastened with chains, and Airi had checked her body for anything she might be carrying, so there was no worry about hidden

weapons.

But, Lux wondered whether she would really be persuaded by him during the time limit.

Family of traitors—why did she call Lux and Airi that?

(Six more days until the Holy Night Festival.....)

The state of complete stalemate due to the threat of Soffice Xfer and Dragon Marauder suddenly changed.

Now that there was only less than two months until the time limit of world destruction by Sacred Eclipse, Lux was feeling a new premonition of trouble.

Episode 4 – The Captive Assailant

Part 1

A memory flickered like a flash.

The seventh Ruin, Moon.

It was an enormous castle floating in the sky, looking down on the world.

Ten-odd years before, Soffice Xfer awoke from her sleep there.

「Ni, nice to meet you desu! ^{Key's Supervisor} Xfer-sama!」

「.....Who, are you?」

「I am called, Re Plica desu! Haaa, I'm glad! You woke up properly.」

When Soffice woke up inside a strange capsule, the girl who appeared in front of her was wearing a dress that fitted tightly on her body, with mechanical ears that looked like fox ears growing on her head.

The girl wasn't human, but the Gear Leader of this Ruin—she introduced herself as the Automata Re Plica.

At that time Soffice was already seven years old, but she didn't remember anything.

Whether it was her past, or the reason why she was here.

Rather than saying that she forgot, it felt like she couldn't recall anything.

「My head, hurts.....」

When she thought, static like a sandstorm appeared in her vision.

Light flickered.

She didn't even understand what she should do inside the strange mechanical fortress.

In contrast with that thought, Soffice was adapting to life in Moon.

What she knew was that she was a member of an ancient race called Xfer, the protectors of the Ruins.

She was the descendant of the people who built this Ruin.

「Why, did you wake me up?」

「It's because there is movement in the surrounding area desu. Doing cold sleep in a pod will stop aging, but you have a duty as a Xfer desu. Also, originally you have to find a person to be your pair and give birth to the next generation desu.」

「.....」

In short, the reason why she was awakened seemed to be because there was a movement of other parties that were interfering with the Ruin, and also so that she could give birth to children of the next generation while she was at it.

Soffice had to get off from this strange Ruin, or even if she didn't get off she could use the base material of children that was preserved in cold storage to give birth to the next generation.

She was told that she had such duty.

「Troublesome, rejected.」

But, Soffice didn't want to do it.

「Wai-!? Why desu-!? It's unexpected that Xfer-sama suddenly abandons your duty desu-. Don't you think of how your ancestors will feel!?!」

「I don't really know about my ancestors. And it looks like there is no information about that remaining too.」

Soffice who was making an ennui expression replied curtly like that.

「I also have no memory and family except my little sister. That's why I'm thinking to live with the two of us harmoniously.」

Soffice noticed the existence of her little sister at one point and woke her up. She wished for a life with the three of them.

Soffice, her little sister Uruk, then the Gear Leader Re Plica.

Regarding the matter of leaving behind offspring, Soffice thought that it was something irrelevant.

Even so, because there was nothing to do, she listened to Re Plica's request and learned how to handle a Drag-Ride.

Uruk herself, also had talent using a Drag-Ride, but because she was unsuited for it, Soffice endeavored with her training in the place of her little sister.

Time passed like that, and Soffice became sixteen, while Uruk was fourteen. At that time, a turning point arrived.

「Hey, Onee-chan. I want to see the world on the ground!」

That sentence was the start of everything.

The fate that the girls unknowingly knitted, and the chance meeting with a hidden fate.

Miraculously, it was also the same beginning as the start of the tragedy that occurred several millennia ago.

The beginning of that wish was going to happen again this time.

.....

—

「-.....!?」

Cold.

The coldness of the air that felt cutting to the skin caused Soffice to shiver and wake up.

She immediately tried to hug herself, then she noticed the sensation of metal that obstructed the movement of her wrists.

「I, what is.....—!?」

Soffice's personality was normally hard to get perturbed, but as expected now

her eyes snapped open in bewilderment.

Her two arms were pulled up above her head in the posture of ‘^{banzai} hurrah’, while her two legs were also connected with chains where each was fixed to a corner of the room.

It seemed that the Sword Device on her waist was taken away along with the sword belt because they weren’t there.

She was completely—taken captive by the enemy.

「Ku.....」

But, the match hadn’t been decided yet.

Her prospect was exceedingly thin, but she had to resist even then.

For the sake of her little sister who died wishing for peace, and this world.

Part 2

「Nn.....」

Lux who was waking up on the worn out sofa sobered up from the coldness of the early morning.

When he opened the pocket watch he had, the time was just about before sunrise.

「.....」

The door of the underground room wasn't opened, but he became concerned about Soffice's condition and peeked inside.

There wasn't any suspicious signs.

In the first room among the four prison rooms, there was a brown skinned girl who had her four limbs chained.

「The chains shouldn't be that tight but, it looks quite painful huh.」

Lux himself, due to his status as an imperial family member of the Old Empire, had experience of entering prison several times. He also could imagine the distress of being chained.

The fire in the fireplace had died, so he threw new firewood into the prison's fireplace and made a fire.

(There should be a hut for serving outside the hangar, so let's brew tea and bring it here.) After observing Soffice inside the room, Lux went out of the underground room for a moment.

When he went back carrying a cup of tea on a tray, the chained girl raised a groan.

「U, u.....」

「Are you awake?」

「This, place..... Where—」

When the girl raised her voice with slightly opened eyes, Lux smiled to her.

His objective was to lessen Soffice's cautiousness, but of course she didn't let her guard down.

「Good morning. Err, Soffice-san.....can I call you that?」

「.....」

Silence with a serious look was returned to him in place of a reply.

For Lux, it was the most troubling reaction.

「Err, do you remember last night? You tried to protect Airi and got defeated by Captain Magialca, though—」

「.....」

Silence again.

「Err— I brought water and tea here, are you thirsty?」

「.....」

The silence didn't change, but her gaze glanced briefly at above her head—toward the shackle restricting her.

「No, as expected I still cannot release that. I think it's harsh but, it doesn't hurt right?」

「Cold, I'm freezing to death.」

「Eh.....?」

「This is just me talking to myself. I have nothing to say to the family of traitors.」

「.....」

Soffice averted her face aside while saying that with a serious look.

(Somehow, she is a particular girl huh.....)

Philuffy and Noct were similarly taciturn, but compared to his childhood friend who went with her own pace and the calm and composed servant girl,

Soffice was different somewhere.

「I get it. Here, drink slowly.」

It seemed she was desiring the tea, so Lux brought the cup of tea to her mouth. Perhaps her throat was dry because she sipped it in one go.

「-Tsuu.....!」

「Wai-, don't be so hurried, if you drink that fast—」

Because Soffice struggled from the heat of the tea, the tea splashed on her clothes.

Lux thought that, as expected, she couldn't drink well from the chained posture and she might get burned, so he used one hand to take off the chain that was shackling up her arms above. It was at that moment—

「It's, my win.」

「-.....!?!」

Soffice's emotionless eyes shined. Right after that, the chain of the shackle that bound Soffice's arm was entangled around Lux's wrist.

Without pause she pulled him and tightened the chain around his neck tightly.

Her drinking too fast and spilling the tea was her acting.

「Ku, uh.....」

Without delay Lux thrust up his arm and prevented his neck from getting completely choked, but the situation was bad.

Soffice seemed to be desperate too. She gritted her teeth and put strength into both her arms.

「Take off the manacles using your free hand. If you do that then I'll at least spare your life.」

「I cannot.....do that.」

「You will die if you are obstinate. You should recognize your defeat right away.」

「If you escape from here, there won't be anymore chance to talk.....I don't want, both of us trying to kill each other.」

「What are you saying this late—」

The moment Soffice's breathing was slightly thrown out of order, he swept up her foot.

「Ua.....」

The moment strength left her arm due to the impact, Lux took off the constriction and pushed her on the wall.

Miraculously, thanks to the tough making of his criminal collar, his neck wasn't completely constricted by the chain.

「Ku..... I blundered.」

「Haa, haa.....I somehow managed.」

After that, Lux somehow sealed Soffice's resistance while hanging up her hands with chain again.

He was resolved of her counterattacking, but it was more troublesome than he imagined.

Lux too had accepted various kind of chores until now, but as expected he had no experience of doing anything that was nearly as close to being a jailer.

While Lux was at a loss of what to ask about her story before persuading her, Soffice was watching the pondering Lux and for some reason her face went pale.

「This is bad. This flow, he will surely call his comrades to beat me up and lynch me.....!」

- Shiver shiver*, her body was shaking along with her pilot suit that had a lot of exposure and she was starting to get scared.

「I won't do anything like that. Or rather, right now it's only me alone who is standing guard here—」

Lux noticed the slip of his tongue when saying that.

If he gave her such information, then the possibility of her trying to escape again would become higher.

「Ju, just one man, is keeping watch of me?」

But, perhaps Soffice sniffed out a different nuance from Lux's words, 「Oh no. This is surely, a flow where I will receive lewd torture from this young man.....!」

「I won't! How can you reach that kind of conclusion!?!」

Lux denied it in great panic, but Soffice was completely getting cold feet.

「.....No, wait. Perhaps, yes, my seductive technique might be effective on him instead.」

「If you are going to trick me then try speaking in a smaller voice!」

「The young man over there, if you take off the chain, I will do something really amazing for you.....perhaps?」

「What's more it's impossible by the time you can only mention the method so lackadaisically like that! There is no way I'll be tempted even if you tell me that right after what just happened!」

「.....」

‘Haa, haa.....’, after Lux retorted so loudly, Soffice hung her head down in a slump.

Until now he had met her several times in the meetings of the Seven Dragon Paladins, but she had never talked at all, so he didn't understand her personality.

Of course, it was also possible that even now she was acting.

(As I thought, she is a particular girl huh.....)

He really couldn't see her as the girl who turned the world alliance into her enemy and led the world by the nose.

But, Lux was starting to think that there was ground for negotiation compared to before.

He mustn't let his guard down, but there was also no way he could take too much time.

Rather, there was only one week until the time limit.

If Lux couldn't persuade Soffice until then, Magialca would use her as hostage and begin negotiations with Re Plica by taking into account the possibility of battle.

Before that happened, he had to converse with her as much as possible.

「Hah.....!」

「.....What's the matter?」

While Lux was thinking of such things, Soffice suddenly turned pale.

Lux thought whether she was imagining herself meeting a bad experience again, but her atmosphere was somewhat different from before.

If he had to sum it up in a few words, she seemed to be completely at her wits' end.

「.....Take off, the chain, now. I won't escape anywhere so, quick!」

Her expression was serious like always, but sweat was starting to trickle from her forehead.

From her urgent voice, it looked like something was happening with her but—

(But, it's possible this might be another trap.....)

As expected there was no way Lux would get tricked the same way multiple times.

He was also standing watch over Soffice alternately with Airi, so she might come here soon.

He guessed it would be better for him to consult her at that time.

「Please, there is no time! Or rather, not just releasing me, I'll be troubled if you don't teach me the location!」

「Eh.....?」

Seeing Soffice breathing roughly 'haa haa', Lux finally realized her intention.

From some time ago, she was rubbing her thighs together.

Thinking back, since she fainted last night, she hasn't gone anywhere from

this spot.

Besides—although the fireplace had fire burning until the middle, the underground room in the middle of winter was still cold.

Her suit also had a lot of skin exposure, naturally that kind of physical phenomenon would inevitably happen.

「Wa-, wait a bit! I will think of a way right now.」

However, what should he do in this situation?

He felt that in general there would be a chamber pot at the corner of the room, or a hole for doing that business, or perhaps someone could accompany the prisoner to go to toilet, but, (If I'm constantly watching her, isn't that also bad in its own way!?) On the other hand, if he brought back a chamber pot here, it would be a bit dangerous to free both her hands. And in that case Lux would have to be the one lowering her pilot suit and taking off her underwear——

「I was bad! Quickly, please! I won't escape!」

「Ca, calm down! I will let you go! But, wait a bit! I'm thinking of various ways to do it so—ah.....!」

The motion of Soffice who was trembling all over with a pale face, abruptly stopped.

Looking closer, there were tears gathering at the corners of her eyes. Her face was bright red and she was stiff.

- Splash splash* Sound of water was echoing inside the dimly lit jail.

He was at a loss of what to say. He was reluctant to witness directly a girl of marriageable age doing that.

「Err, that, what do I say.....sorry.」

「.....Die. Someone like you, just die-!」

Soffice discarded the mask of composure she was wearing until now and glared at him with resentful teary eyes.

(Err, this is bad. What do I do? Even though I should be asking her story and make her open her heart somehow, somehow the worst development has.....-!) While Lux was also baffled and losing his head in shock, footsteps approached from outside the jail.

「Nii-san. How is Soffice-san doing? For the time being I'm bringing tea for when she is awake but—ah.....」

- Clang*, Airi dropped the metallic tray she brought.

Fortunately the cup didn't break, but after the place was filled with quiet silence, an awkward atmosphere flowed.

「Yo, you are wrong Airi!? This is, that, should I call it a bit of a misunderstanding, it wasn't like I did anything—!」

「Please get out from here Nii-san.」

Airi said that with a wide smile and dark shadow covering her eyes.

Her not saying a single word of anger was terrifying instead.

Lux went out of the jail dejectedly and left everything to Airi.

Well, it was only Soffice's lower body that got wet, so he only handed her the key for her legs' chain and asked her to take care of it.

「Haa, I've done it now.....」

The accident that happened coincidentally because he wasn't used to the jailer role was an act of god.

Of course he had no bad intention, but he regretted that the worst result happened at the very beginning.

Lux returned to the girl's dormitory for the moment, leaving the rest to Airi's follow-up.

Part 3

「Good grief.....Nii-san is really troubling.」

Airi went out first to gather preparations for the cleaning, then she performed the work while sighing.

Soffice was wearing her pilot suit under her outfit that possessed high exposure rate, so Airi took off the trouser and the pilot suit under it.

She wiped her body with a towel that was soaked with hot water, put on the underwear she brought as replacement, and then she began to clean up the jail.

「There is ventilation here, so I think the smell won't remain, but just in case I borrowed perfume from Sharis-san.」

「Why, didn't you call your comrades?」

When Airi was taking a rest from mopping the floor, Soffice who was quiet until then suddenly spoke.

「The perverted young man.....your big brother should have told you how I choked him. And yet why are you working here alone? It's dangerous.」

「You are saying that? Even though you only met a terrible experience because of others feeling wary of you.」

「.....」

After Airi said that sounding a bit exasperated, Soffice fell silent.

「There isn't any particular meaning. It's just, I don't want this to become even more troublesome than this. Even though Nii-san has ability to take action, he is really careless in various things.」

「.....」

Soffice who had her body wiped and her underwear changed returned to her calm expression like before.

But, she was staring fixedly at Airi's behavior and tone.

A strange silence flowed.

It wasn't a sense of tension like a cold war, both sides were observing each other to see how the other would act.

「Can I, ask questions for a bit?」

「I cannot be locked here indefinitely.」

「Are you saying that your subordinates, Dragon Marauder will come to rescue you? I think that's impossible. Previously, due to the Human Dragon division commander Drakkhen getting taken away from under the Academy's confinement, the surrounding's security has been increased by a lot—」

「They aren't my subordinates. I only temporarily hired those guys recently, I don't know them well.」

「Is that so?」

Airi replied with a bit of surprise.

On the other hand Soffice thought her tongue had just slipped, but her tone returned to being curt once more.

「I won't mind telling you if you let me get out from here. You still have a leeway to make the good choice. But at this rate you won't be able to choose it.」

「What, do you mean?」

「Doesn't matter, let me out. There is not much time.」

「By time, do you mean the time limit until the world destruction by Sacred Eclipse?」

「.....」

Airi asked back, but Soffice didn't answer.

Right after that, the sound of a bell inside the Academy that notified the waking up time could be heard faintly.

「I will come again. There are guards outside, so you must not do anything

reckless.」

Strictly speaking, there was no jailer to watch over Soffice specifically, but Airi intentionally said that.

After Airi left that place, a cold and silent atmosphere filled the jail.

「Although she is an enemy, but I'm reluctant to attack a little sister. The big brother seems to be careless, so I'll aim at that.」

Soffice talked to herself with a small voice that no one could hear.

「But, there is no time..... If I'm not there, the Dragon Marauder bunch, they will make use of Re Plica and make her act. If that happens, it'll be bad.」

But, right after Soffice made that resolve of insurrection, she was taken aback from noticing something.

「Toilet, the next time I want to go, what to do.....」

Part 4

In the sky of the New Kingdom's western territory, the seventh Ruin Moon was awaiting.

In the sky where no one was noticing it due to the optic camouflage applied to it, a great turmoil was occurring.

「Aah geez, what to do desu!? If Soffice is captured, then everything is futile desu! Even though I had warned her so much to be careful when she went to collect Airi—」

A small girl abandoned the control of Moon and made a ruckus.

The Automata girl which was the Gear Leader.

Re Plica with mechanical fox ears growing from her head was there.

「What? Even though she said that we will guard her when going to liberate Garden, could it be she is tearing up the contract?」

There, a woman wearing black clothes and light armor like a bandit—Dragon Marauder's Human Dragon division commander Drakkhen Megistri, showed up and spoke.

「Shut up desu. I want you to not forget who is the one offering hideout to all of you who have no more place to go desu.」

「Certainly you're right. Our subordinates have also decreased considerably in number from the recent fighting. It will be just one or two more times that we will be able to exchange blows with those guys properly.」

「Then, quickly go and recover your employer desu! You know the place already desu.」

「That's impossible you know, Automata-san.」

Drakkhen shook her head with a somewhat exasperated smile.

「Previously my comrades rescued me when I was locked up in the Academy's jail. But this time the situation is different. There are only two Ruins remaining that haven't been liberated, so the enemy force is concentrated there. Whether it's that Academy or the royal capital, there is always one or two Seven Dragon Paladins staying there. Even we won't be able to just march in there.」

「You've got a lot of excuses before doing anything even though you are just a mercenary desu. Someone like that is called incompetent desu!」

Re Plica, who was anxious because of the absence of her master, Soffice, scowled and hurled abuses.

Then, at that timing a knocking sound *kon kon* came from outside the control room.

The door was left open, so it was only a signal to inform of the visitor's arrival.

The one who entered from there was a man with tanned skin and a masculine face.

It was Dragon Marauder's Heaven Dragon division commander who led the Wyvern force, the young man named Gatouhan.

He was formerly a mercenary Drag-Knight who was employed by the Turkimes Confederation. He was a survivor of indigenous people who got persecuted and chased away from their living place.

He was in the latter half of his twenties, approaching the age where his experience and stamina were taking balance.

「Is it okay for me to join the conversation too? That guy Vine is away so I'm bored.」

「Oh, isn't this the right moment for you to come helping me? Do you have any ulterior motive?」

「I don't need a woman with bad habit like you. More importantly, employer-dono, I want you to correct your statement there a bit.」

Gatouhan avoided Drakkhen's talk and spoke to Re Plica.

「If you want me to correct me treating you as incompetent, then come after achieving results desu. Specifically speaking, after taking back Soffice—」

「It's about that matter though, won't you stop trying to save her already?」

「Ha.....?」

Re Plica's eyes opened wide at Gatouhan's question and she went stiff.

「What are you saying desu!? Has even your brain turned stupid desu!? What are you planning to do, abandoning your employer like that desu!?」

「Calm down now. I only mean that it's impossible to do it right away.」

Gatouhan smiled bitterly while telling that to soothe Re Plica.

「Honestly speaking, our situation was nearly checkmate by the time your master failed to secure an Arcadia. That failure itself was due to the trap of the Seven Dragon Paladins' captain, Magialca Zen Vanfrick.」

「.....」

「Your master being captive also turns it into a trap that could even get us rounded up all at once if we go to save her. If more time passes, the other side will surely come to negotiate using her as a hostage. It will be better to move at that time.」

「What are you going to do if Soffice is killed before that huh!? Everything will be over then desu!」

「If she becomes a captive, then at the very least that won't happen. Those guys are also not that stupid.」

「Then you guys are unnecessary so you all are fired desu. It is a really short relationship, isn't it desu.」

Re Plica was impatient with Dragon Marauder that didn't change their stance of wait-and-see till the end and said that. Hearing that, the leader Gatouhan silently smiled.

「Don't be so hurried like that. I didn't say that we won't go to save her right?」

「That's right. Even though we look like this, we are famous for completing the duty that was requested of us.」

「.....What do you want desu?」

Re Plica was vigilant toward Drakkhen's bright tone and scowled.

Then Gatouhan also pressed the Automata girl with a calm smile.

「It's not like I'm telling you to increase the reward. I only want you to cooperate in order to save your master.」

「.....」

「For the advance payment, apply Baptism on us. That's possible if it's now after we have been administered with minute amounts of Elixir several times right?」

「.....From where did you guys learn that knowledge desu?」

Re Plica strengthened her wariness hearing Gatouhan's proposal and said.

「We are merely wishing to always pick the choice with higher possibility even if just for a little.」

Even the Earth Dragon division commander Vine had come and listened to the talk from an unknown point in time.

He was a young man with a face that still had a trace of childishness in it, but his bearing that had no openings gave him the air as a mercenary.

「The world alliance and the Seven Dragon Paladins are strong. Especially the users of Divine Drag-Rides at that Academy—the lot called Syvalles aren't your average Drag-Knights. Even if we invest all our remaining forces including the Abyss, we won't be able to contend with them easily.

The young man began with that while straightening his back once more and stared at Re Plica.

「You too, if you are the tool of your Xfer master then you should do that, choosing the option that raises the possibility to save her even by ten percent. Am I wrong?」

「.....」

Re Plica couldn't reply to Vine's question.

It was a completely sound argument.

As an Automata, she had to take back her master Soffice no matter what method she had to use.

When she was awakened, she thought that she should act by obeying that kind of manual.

But, Soffice didn't demand her to act as a subordinate.

『Living here forever gives nothing but free time, so become my talking partner.』

Toward Re Plica who was the existence who woke her up, Soffice was looking for an equal relationship from her along with her little sister.

However, could she believe in these mercenaries who lived all this time only by rewards from other people in the end?

In any case, there were not much choices and time remaining to save Soffice.

She could be sure of that if nothing else.

「It can't, be helped desu. However, it's better if you all don't think that you can do anything with Avalon without Soffice desu. Also, I won't care even if you die because the Baptism failed desu.」

「Agreed, our master of this time. Then, I ask you to grant Baptism upon us using the functions of this Moon.」

Gatouhan calmly nodded without even showing any delight.

That calmness was even more eerie for Re Plica.

It was as though even this flow of event might be a part of their prearranged plan—she thought.

Part 5

On the other hand, six days later already after the battle of Soffice and Magialca.

While Lux and Airi were fretting with persuading Soffice, the Academy was enveloped in lively commotion.

Because the Holy Night Festival was close, the students were starting to prepare presents for the opposite sex.

On the Holy Night itself, it was the custom to prepare a small banquet, snacks, and then wine for prayer, but on the previous day a costume festival for merrymaking was permitted.

Recently, the students were especially making an effort in the preparations after school was over.

Lux was given permission to be exempt from doing chores outside the Academy, but he was frequently made to help with the work other than that.

Of course, Tillfur of the Triad checked the vast amount of chore requests for Lux until only a tenth of them was left, even so the number was still many.

「Wait right there—! Hogging Lux-chi longer than that will be in violation of the prohibition list! Please make a formal request for something like that okay?」

「No waaay, even though I thought I finally can go out with him to buy plates.」

Lux was detained by third year female students and he was told that they wanted him to choose the plates that would be used for the Holy Night Festival, but the time for that was dragging on.

At that kind of time, the Triad often gave follow-up for Lux who was weak against pressure.

「No. Please keep it within 5 minutes when monopolizing Lux-san without going through requests. Because, in addition to his Seven Dragon Paladins duty, he also has to do the arranged chore requests.」

「Wait, you all are measuring the time every time.....」

As expected even Lux was shocked by the Triad's thoroughness.

Honestly speaking, perhaps because recently he was often absent from the Academy, he got called by the female students here and there even more than before, so he was helped by the Triad's assistance.

However, the content of his chores was also a bit different from before.

The reason Lux was popular in the past was because he was the only male student in the Academy and the curiosity towards him as a former imperial family member.

But, after he distinguished himself through his battles as a Syvalles member, this time it was his strength as a Drag-Knight that was paid attention to, and now it was his story as a Seven Dragon Paladin that was sought.

Although, because the common students didn't know about the danger of world destruction by Sacred Eclipse, it looked like to them that Lux was making achievements as a Drag-Knight internationally too.

When it came to that, other than friendly gazes, there was also a kind of envious gaze mixed in with them.

Thinking of his past, this was something to be thankful about, but he was also feeling troubled by the giddy atmosphere of the girls.

The Triad was managing at that kind of aspect where Lux was poor at.

「Well, originally, if it's just them calling out and talking to you, we won't scold them just for such a minor matter.」

Sharis nodded with a troubled look.

「Eerr, then isn't it fine?」

「We cannot do that. Or rather, recently, because many formal requests won't get through to you, underhanded tricks like 『first calling out to you and then

dragging you away』 is turning into a fad.」

「Eh.....?」

He didn't dare to believe it but, to think that this situation of chore work request would develop until such thing.

「Lux-chi cannot go against us after everything we have done for you y'know?」

「Yes. We will ask Lux-san later to personally come and show your gratitude as reward for us.」

Even his admiration only lasted for a brief time. Lux smiled wryly at the Triad who casually included their own request.

「*Cough* The present for you is also flooding in despite the limited number of reservations. We are going to deliver to you later the presents from everyone in Syvalles. Rather, the headmaster is already planning an event—oops, that is still a secret.」

「I can only have bad premonitions about that.....」

Even though there was also still the matter of Soffice under this kind of situation, just what was the headmaster thinking he wondered.

『It's exactly because it's this kind of time that you have to treasure the ordinary days. You don't have anything else you can do anyway.』

「.....」

The smiling face of the headmaster floated in his mind.

「.....However, I cannot see Airi anywhere. She temporarily excused herself saying she has a bit of business, so I completely thought that she went to Lux-san.」

「Ah.....!」

Lux recalled a certain thing from Noct's question.

Lux and Airi were watching over Soffice in turn.

It had already somewhat passed the time to change shift.

「Sorry. I also recalled a chore I need to do, see you all later!」

「Ah—」

Lux left those words and rushed through the Academy at full speed.

The Triad who saw that were standing still, mouths agape for a while.

「What the? It's rare that Lux-chi is that hurried. —Rather, it's unnatural?」

「Yeah, could it be, I'm only supposing here okay」

「That, is it related to that pact?」

Noct continued after Sharis's serious muttering.

「Perhaps. It could be, that pact might have become meaningless.」

「You're saying, in other words—」

「There is a chance Lux-chi and a member of Syvalles is secretly having a tryst!?!」

Tillfur's uneasy question was answered by Sharis with a nervous look too.

The pact of the girls.

Syvalles members starting from Lisha, and also Yoruka, they established a pact that decided that they wouldn't develop their relationships with Lux into a romantic relationship until they settled the matter of Sacred Eclipse and overcame the danger of world destruction.

Airi and the Triad were also aware of the pact and it was only Lux who didn't know anything about it. The girls were secretly talking to each other about it and made the decision on a certain day.

Recently, some of them were seriously injured, and some of them would frequently come and go from Cross Field to other countries in this period of time. They wouldn't be able to concentrate if they thought that the others might steal a march on them.

Krulcifer suggested that they should refrain from approaching Lux by their own initiative until the battle ended. Everyone agreed to it.

And then, strangely, it was Airi and the Triad who were assigned the role to

manage the pact.

Airi became the center of it was simply because of her position as Lux's blood-related sister.

「But, there is one exception to this rule.」

Sharis murmured as though she recalled something.

「Yes. Lux-san isn't forbidden to contact the girls by his own initiative.」

「In other words, if Lux-chi himself already has a girl who he likes, and approaches her—」

There would be no method to obstruct that based on the rules.

In short, a romantic relationship would be settled without waiting for the conclusion with Sacred Eclipse.

The remaining members would surely receive a shock, but there was nothing that could be done about it.

「Then, we, the vigilance committee, have the duty to investigate the truth. Am I right?」

「Nooo objection! Or rather, it's not serious right.....」

「Yes. Let's follow behind Lux-san.」

Sharis's eyes sparkled, then Tillfur and Noct also continued after her.

A different danger was approaching from a place that Lux wasn't aware of.

Part 6

「Sorry Airi! I was late!」

「Now look here..... It was Nii-san who talked about persuading Soffice-san you know?」

Lux who entered inside the underground room of the Drag-Ride hangar got glared at reproachfully by Airi who was waiting outside the prison.

「Soffice, did she say anything?」

「She only badmouthed Nii-san about how Nii-san forced her to pee while Nii-san was watching.」

「I'm telling you that's a misunderstanding!」

No, in a sense that might be the truth, but as expected Lux was troubled if she said it as though he wanted it to happen.

「I'm joking. More importantly, Nii-san wasn't followed by anyone right?」

「Yes. As expected I'm paying attention to that.」

The matter of Soffice being confined in the underground of this Academy was an extremely secret matter that even the Queen wasn't aware of.

If this fact became known, Soffice's personage would have to be handed over to the world alliance as a suspect and also as a hostage.

If they were in direct confrontation with Soffice's side, than that might be the correct choice.

But, most likely, the path of hearing the truth from them and persuading them would be closed by doing that.

In any case, they had to conduct themselves carefully from here on.

「Then, I'll take over the watch-keeping.」

「Yes. There is no problem with her physical condition. Other than that, let's be alert against the Academy's surroundings. I'll have Lisha-sama and the others strengthen their alertness indirectly.」

「Right. I'll leave it to you Airi.」

They only exchanged those words and Lux entered inside the prison.

「I'm coming in Soffice.」

Lux called out just in case and he stepped inside the large room where the prisons were lined up.

When he went to the front of the prison where Soffice was chained, her eyes were half-opened while staring blankly at empty air. She wasn't breathing.

「What happened Soffice, hang in there!」

Soffice's body was limp with her arms and legs dangling languidly. Lux tried to check her pulse.

Then, the girl's eyes suddenly snapped open and she hurriedly drew back.

「Pervert..... Why are you trying to touch the body of a girl who lost consciousness? Normally one should first take off the chain.」

「Eh? Hu, huh.....?」

He completely thought that she died, but seeing her reacting immediately like that caused Lux to feel bewildered.

What was going on?

「.....Hah, damn it. *Slump*」

At the side while Lux was being shaken, Soffice abruptly went languid once more as though her soul had left her body.

「Err, could it be, you are pretending to die?」

「.....」

There was no reply.

But, when he tried to check her pulse again, Soffice leaped in a flash and glared at Lux with a gaze that was filled with ennui.

「You will fool around with someone when you think they are sleeping, this fiend.」

「So you are awake as expected. Haa, that surprised me.」

Lux amended so that there was no misunderstanding, but he faltered against the doubting gaze that Soffice sent him with her serious look.

Well, perhaps this was already better just from how she would talk with him now.

On the first two, three days, she wouldn't even say anything to him because of that aforementioned case.

「.....You want to look, that much?」

「Eh.....?」

But, after a silence of a full ten seconds, Soffice suddenly said that to him.

「If it's just for a bit, it's okay you know? My, important place.」

「Wha-!? Just, what are you saying!?!」

In front of the bewildered Lux who couldn't comprehend what happened, Soffice slowly wriggled her body.

In the first place her pilot suit exposed a lot of her skin, so when she wriggled her body, her waist and her side, and then her breasts entered his gaze.

「Please. The chain hurts. It's leaving marks.」

「I, is that so」

Certainly, that might be something painful for a girl of her age.

Lux who was thinking that moved his hand to take the key for the shackle, but then, 「Wait a second. Thinking carefully, aren't you trying to trick me again to get out?」

「.....Not true.」

「At least talk while looking at my eyes!?!」

She averted her gaze still with a serious look, so it was really easy to understand.

As expected, it didn't look like Lux was suited for this kind of work.

However, he also couldn't spend so much time to talk with her.

There were only two days left until the time limit that he promised Magialca.

At this rate, she would be used as a hostage to negotiate with the Moon and it would turn into a battle.

「As I thought, rather than the little sister, the older brother seems like a simpleton.」

「Err, can you stop saying that when I'm right in front of you.....?」

No matter how correct that was, it was depressing as expected when he was told that right to his face.

「Then, I'll go with a threat. There is not much time left. I told the others of a time limit before I went out.」

「Time limit?」

「I also told Re Plica of what to do when I, who is the boss, doesn't return to the Moon. If I don't return for one week after I leave, then who knows what the Moon will do.」

「What, did you say?」

The complexion of Lux who heard that changed.

In other words, she must mean that the Ragnarok would be given orders by the Moon to attack all the countries.

「That's why, I want you to release me right away. If you do that, I promise I won't attack the New Kingdom.」

Right after she told Lux that, the sound of a bell that informed of the time could be heard.

For the time being, Lux left from there.

He didn't even notice how Soffice had found an old wire in the corner of the jail that she used bit by bit on her arm's shackle.

Part 7

「The negotiation with her, is still impossible.....」

Lux exited the underground prison of the Drag-Ride hangar and muttered to himself.

He had also heard from Airi that although Soffice's attitude had softened somewhat, she would become completely obstinate when it came to the crux of the matter.

Perhaps that was only natural.

She was trying to obtain Avalon that she went as far as turning the whole world into her enemy, so her resolve mustn't be something half-baked.

(However, why? It feels like she herself is hesitating.)

He had no concrete basis about that, but that was what Lux's instinct told him.

Even though she actually wanted to talk frankly, but she put on a mask of logic and suppressed her feelings.

Lux was feeling such impression from her.

However, Lux didn't know what to do so that she would open up.

He didn't understand what he should do to break her resolve.

If he was going to have discussion, he wanted to talk not with Dragon Marauder, but with Re Plica who was remaining in the Moon, but that was impossible to do.

He thought that at the very least Soffice might listen to Krulcifer who was also a Xfer, but Krulcifer didn't have any memory about her childhood, so he also thought that it might not be really effective doing that.

While he was thinking of those things, he felt his back getting tapped.

「Lux-chiii, what are you doing at this kind of place?」

「Uwah!? Wait, Tillfur? Wh, why are you here?」

「Ohooh, you look flustered about something theree. Are you meeting with a girl perhaps?」

「U..... no err—I just have a chore here.」

Lux was startled in his heart hearing Tillfur hitting the bull's eye.

He immediately made a smile to gloss over it, but he was looked at with an even more dubious gaze.

「Nnn, my bad hunch is right on the mark I think. But, we confirmed already that Lisha-sama and the others aren't here at all. Don't tell me, Lux-chi's lover candidate is a third force!?!」

「What are you talking about-!? Or rather, Tillfur yourself, what are you doing here!?!」

Lux retorted to his female classmate who was starting to think seriously for some reason. Then the girl grinned as though recalling something.

「Riight riight, tomorrow is the event day so I'm thinking to tell you that. The Holy Night Festival's game!」

「That's, don't tell me it's what Relie-san—」

His bad premonition was right on the mark.

「Yep! Its name iis, Lux-chi Present War! Waaai, clap clap clap—」

Lux stiffened with his face half twitching. Tillfur was really in high spirits in front of him.

If he didn't persuade Soffice during tomorrow, then the next morning Magialca would come but.....

No rather, perhaps it was Lux who did bad because he couldn't do anything within these few days.

It seemed that the event was held because the present for Lux was too many and not all of them could be handed to him, but he wondered just what were they going to do?

「—And, what do I need to do specifically at that event?」

「Nn, it's a secret right now. Well, just focus fully on that the whole day tomorrow okay? I don't know whose request you are accepting but, we have the preferential right here.」

「Ah.....ye, yes.」

Now that he was told that, certainly he had previous engagement with Tillfur and the others.

Besides there was also no way he could talk about the matter of Soffice, so Lux could only nod.

「Then, do your best tomorrow! Everyone is looking forward to it sooo much after all.」

Tillfur parted from him while waving her hand smilingly. Lux let out a deep sigh.

(This isn't the time to do that kind of thing though.)

Although it was only for half a day, but it was regrettable that so much time to persuade Soffice would get taken away. During that time he would have to ask Airi to watch over Soffice, so he was troubled.

But, currently he had no plan to solve it, so either way he felt like he wouldn't be able to do anything.

By the way, one Seven Dragon Paladin member was dispatched to the royal capital and the Academy each for security, but Magialca departed to Marcafal Kingdom last night.

「I wish someone who can be trusted to a degree will come.」

Or rather, as long as it wasn't Singlen, anyone would be fine.

He would feel reluctant in various senses having that man watching the present event for Lux.

Perhaps he had recovered enough composure to be able to think of such trivial things.

In any case, the situation would move in a big way after tomorrow.

He was also concerned about Lisha and the others, but Lux had finished visiting all of them.

「It will be great if nothing happens though—」

He went to the hangar one more time to look at Soffice for the last time before he returned to his own room.

And then, the day of the Holy Night Festival event finally arrived.

Part 8

A few days ago—at the center of the New Kingdom, the royal capital Lordgalia.

Inside a meeting room within the towering royal castle, a silent debate was continuing.

「Soon there won't be any choice but to resolve ourselves and counterattack. There is no time remaining for us.」

「But, we should have expressed our opinion that we cannot go with that kind of forced plan.」

Queen Raffi of the New Kingdom Atismata responded to the representatives of various countries with a firm attitude.

Soffice sealed the Ruin liberation of all the countries by threatening to use the Moon's weapons and Ragnarok. This was a meeting to decide the countermeasure against that. An endless argument was unfurling there.

The high officials who were representatives of various countries were clamoring inside the meeting room.

With the possibility of their own country getting exposed to danger, there was no way all the leaders could continue to stay in the New Kingdom. These officials came here as substitutes.

On the first few days, everyone was trembling in fear from Soffice's war proclamation and they had an indecisive attitude, but after that, the wind's direction changed completely. The voices that were wishing to counterattack were getting louder.

Looking at the convenience to install the Grand Forces that were taken out from the two Ragnarok into the Ruins, it could be calculated that there was high possibility that the Moon was located near the New Kingdom Atismata and the

Ymir Theocracy where the two Ruins that hadn't been liberated were located. So the representatives of the remaining five countries dared to say that they should be resolved for sacrifices and attack.

On the contrary, the New Kingdom that had the greatest possibility to receive harm had to avoid that no matter what. Queen Raffi and Prime Minister Nulph were desperately continuing to oppose that.

But, in reality they also understood the reason why all the other countries were urging like that.

At this rate, Dragon Marauder might take control of Avalon.

If that happened, they would be put under their rule and the countries would lose the meaning of their existence.

There was still an extension of two months so they were able to delay, but sooner or later it would be inevitable that they all had to head into battle.

Then, all the countries would want to annihilate the enemy no matter what at the timing where the possibility that their own country wouldn't be damaged was the highest.

Thinking that, the representatives tried to carry out the brute force strategy by using just reasoning as a shield.

If Raffi and Nulph were in the opposite position, they would surely do the same thing.

Thus they were tired of the meeting that was only going in circles without finding any point of compromise no matter how much time passed.

「Your majesty Princess Listelka, do you have any excellent plan for this matter?」

Prime Minister Nulph who was troubled of where to escape addressed Listelka, the representative of the Lords who happened to be present.

Then, the pure white imperial princess who possessed inhuman beauty quietly opened her closed eyes.

Her left and right eyes had different colors of grey and scarlet.

With those eyes she looked around quietly at the representatives of the various countries, and then she formed her words.

「Let's see. I don't wish to say this to the New Kingdom that inherited the bloodline of my Divine Arcadia Empire but—as expected I believe we should resolve ourselves for the damage and go to take back the Moon.」

「Ooh.....!」

At that moment, the high officials excluding the representatives of the Ymir Theocracy raised excited cheers.

「As expected from the imperial family of the ancient era, what a magnificent determination!」

「There is no other way than that. It's unfortunate.」

「To not shirk back even if her lineage's descendant country might get harmed, how heroic.」

And so on, many mouths were starting to get carried away speaking out irresponsible words.

The royalty of the Lords, Listelka herself was saying that although the Old Empire Arcadia was applicable to be her distant descendant, they weren't directly related to her.

Even so Nulph was holding hope that she would stick up for the New Kingdom from feeling sympathy, but his expectation ended in vain.

Far from that, the Lords who were the key for conquering Avalon was acting affirmative for the counterattack plan.

This flow was already unstoppable sooner or later.

「.....Can I ask everyone, to wait for a little bit more? Even if we are going to attack the Moon, it's necessary to gather our forces for the sake of defending the country. Please—」

When Raffi requested so with a bitter expression, the high official of the Ymir Theocracy also bowed his head next.

With them conducting themselves like that, it also became hard for the other

countries to demand even more than that.

If they acted unreasonably, then the next time it was their country that fell into danger, it might become their turn to get abandoned.

「Then after the preparations, we will move into offense. The day of the counterattack will be five days later. The next day after this country's holy night festival will be fine.」

The war council was concluded with Listelka's direction.

The meeting was temporarily disbanded and the high officials of all the countries left from the meeting room. But even after that, Raffi kept sitting down with her head hanging down.

「Your majesty. Please don't be disheartened.」

The counterattack getting recognized was a choice that couldn't be helped.

If that situation kept as it was, in the worst case the world alliance would crumble and the remaining five countries would side with the Lords.

If the Lords lost their patience and abandoned the New Kingdom, the other countries would surely follow them.

Above all else, right now the New Kingdom's influence towards the other countries wasn't that strong compared to the time of the Old Empire Arcadia.

If they were betrayed, then an even more wretched end would wait for them.

「This can't be helped isn't it? The New Kingdom, too, had caused trouble for them in the past after all.」

「.....」

Nulph didn't respond to the queen's murmur that was filled with resignation.

Half of the countries that were gathered here received invasion of various size and shapes in the era of the Old Empire, and they held quite the resentment due to that.

Even if the New Kingdom received great damage, they wouldn't worry about it.

「Because the counterattack towards the Moon has been decided, let's gather

the Four Great Nobles. It's a gamble to reinstate Warg Kreutzer, but at present there are also a lot of nobles who will become an ally through his mediation.」

Warg Kreutzer was one of the Four Great Nobles who had done illegality behind the scenes along with his son Balzeride and lost his standing, but he still had strong influence in his territory.

Especially with the work of his second son Sieg Kreutzer, the western territory where they were located was showing strong signs of rebellion.

In this situation where the New Kingdom was put in a disadvantage, even a single more Drag-Knight was desirable in order to protect the nobles of the royal capital.

If that was the case, then the capital inevitably had no other choice but to borrow their strength.

For the New Kingdom that had once judged Lord Warg as a person in the wrong, this was a mortifying decision but—there was no other way to break the deadlock of this situation.

「I'll leave it to you Nulph. Because you are the one who is more knowledgeable in that area.....」

「Please leave it to me..... Oi, escort her majesty to her bedroom.」

Nulph who exited the room called a servant for Raffi who was unsteady on her feet from exhaustion.

After entrusting the Queen to the servant, Nulph gathered the necessary documents and headed to visit the consuls.

He was walking inside the darkness through the corridor that was faintly illuminated by tallow lamp.

His face that was reflected on the window was different from just now. Indifferent and dark eyes could be seen.

「.....That woman is more useless than I thought. Even managing this country using Count Atismata's influence has reached the limit with this predicament. If I borrow the power of the Four Great Nobles even more than this, the balance of power will collapse.」

That expression was the face of a prime minister that was facing the reality ruthlessly.

「In any case, I have to prepare. Connections with the Four Great Nobles is indispensable in this New Kingdom. There are a lot of camps I can jump ship to.」

A voice so small that couldn't be heard by anyone echoed inside Prime Minister Nulph's head.

Like that, he resumed walking once more into the darkness of the corridor that couldn't be seen where it was leading to.

Episode 5 – Behind the Scenes of the Sacred Party

Part 1

A memory flickered.

In the seventh Ruin Moon, Soffice Xfer woke up from the hibernation pod and encountered the Automata Re Plica.

There was no other comrades remaining, and she lived in the Ruin.

They passed peaceful days together with her little sister Uruk.

And then—one day Uruk said that she wanted to try seeing the outside world.

『I want friends from the outside world.』

The innocent little sister said that hopefully.

She wanted to grant the wish of her little sister.

Thinking that she also wanted to do that, Soffice and co. went outside.

Just like the Xfer in the past who also did so, they wished to interact with the humans who they were still unfamiliar with.

They descended to the Old Empire Arcadia more than ten-odd years ago.

When they descended to that large country where three Ruins were remaining within its territory, Soffice's skin was white, and her hair was also blue.

「.....I won't, forgive.」

The brightness of flame blazing in the fireplace showered her face. The awakened Soffice renewed her determination.

The wound on her shoulder that was torn up at that time had almost vanished completely, but the pain was seared into her memory even now.

The accident where they headed to the Garden together with the imperial family of the Arcadia Empire.

At that time, if Re Plica didn't save her, she would have died.

Her little sister Uruk wouldn't come back anymore.

Just because they tried to have faith in the people of this era, just because they got involved with the family of traitors, Soffice lost something irreplaceable forever.

「That's why I—won't trust anyone anymore.」

A part of broken chain fell into a gap within the prison must be because this place hadn't been used for a long time.

In order to prevent blood congestion from getting restrained for a long period, Airi would take off her chains one at a time. Using that timing, she luckily obtained a fragment in the shape of a wire.

She somehow brought it until her hand and then she tampered with her shackle's keyhole for nearly half a day.

She had to reach Avalon and protect the world from destruction by Sacred Eclipse.

However, she wondered why?

Even though that girl didn't resemble Soffice's little sister at all who was innocent and pure, for some reason when Soffice looked at her, she recalled her little sister Uruk.

When Soffice peed, Airi didn't call for other people and cleaned it up herself was so that Soffice wouldn't hold an even worse impression towards Lux.

「Even though, this isn't the time to bask in sentimentality.」

- Click*, finally the unlocking using wire went well and next her right hand also got free.

Next she also finished unlocking the chains on her legs and she was completely freed. But as expected because her Sword Device was hidden away, she was unarmed.

「It's necessary, to look for a chance.」

Soffice thought with her usual serious look that was dyed with nihility.

At that time outside the jail, a conversation with small voice could be heard.

「As expected there is nobody here. It seems there is no possibility of Lux-chi secretly having a tryst with someone.」

From the voice of the girl who sounded relieved somehow, Soffice judged that they weren't looking for her.

「Yes. I'm glad that you two can feel relieved. Because you two were unexpectedly restless.」

「You say that Noct, but when you heard that Lux-kun might have a partner, weren't you yourself really bothered?」

「.....」

Soffice felt like she had heard their voices somewhere before, but she couldn't remember where.

「Enough with that, let's get out of here. Even we are forbidden to enter this place.」

The voice that was only slightly oozing with discomfort was speaking indifferently.

「Right'o. Today is the Holy Night Festival event, it's gonna be busy.」

「Are you all right Tillfur? You were doing preparations until late at night yesterday.」

「Oof course. I also finished my costume preparations. Complete with the makeup tool and the outfit. I already collected it beforehand at the girl's dormitory's hall.」

「Yeah, the situation is like this right now, but we've got to have fun when we can. Then, let's go.」

It seemed they finished talking. The footsteps were going farther.

It appeared there was an exit some distance away from this prison.

Most likely there was a locked door or a hidden passage.

But, from the looks of it, it seemed that other than Lux and a few others, the matter of Soffice's capture wasn't known widely.

Besides, according to the preliminary investigation of Dragon Marauder, she also knew that the majority of this Academy's students didn't know about her war declaration towards the world alliance too.

If she could just deceive those students' eyes, it was possible for her to sneak around.

「.....Right, makeup.」

Because it was still early in the morning, there should be few people around.

Even if she escaped, the possibility that her Sword Device was hidden inside this Drag-Ride hangar was little.

「First I'll disguise myself, and then take back Vritra. Snatching Airi will be after that.」

Soffice took a deep breath and brushed away the unlocked chains.

When she exited the prison cell, she discovered the entrance of a hidden passage by groping the wall around, and then she ran outside.

Part 2

It was a morning where the chirping of small birds could be heard.

「Fuua.....」

Lux woke up with a small yawn.

Last night he helped out with the decorations for the night before the Holy Night Festival, so he was a bit sleepy.

As expected from mid winter, it was cold, but he sobered up after doing light calisthenics inside the room.

He went to check on Soffice before sleeping, but her attitude was brusque as usual.

He only heard a sentence 『It looks like, you are really loved by your little sister』 from her but—

(Only one day remaining.)

If the time limit passed, Magialca would start negotiations with the Automata as well as Dragon Marauder who were remaining in the Moon using Soffice as hostage.

He had to somehow persuade Soffice before that happened.

「Before that, I have to focus on the Academy this afternoon.」

The costume party that would be held in the Academy the day before the Holy Night Festival.

Lux was selected as the main lead of that event that Relie assembled.

The original Holy Night Festival was a custom that existed as a festival since before the time of the Old Empire. The adults would dress in ceremonial dresses, but the children would copy animal appearances by wearing costumes and handed over presents to the opposite sex. That was the gist of it.

And then, it was the etiquette for a male to show their gratitude for that present later on.

「Somehow, it feels nostalgic.」

In his period of chore livelihood, Lux had never received any present, so it had been a while for him to experience this event.

He was thinking such thing while finishing changing into his uniform, then his door was knocked.

「Moorning! Lux-chi, you awaake!?!」

An energetic voice that was distinctive of Tillfur.

As expected, she came early in the morning.

Because in the event today where Lux became the main lead, the Triad would be escorting him.

「Morning, Tillfur.....wait, eeeh!?!」

The moment he opened his room's door, Lux's mind came to a halt from bewilderment seeing the sight before him.

A black one piece and tights that clung tightly on the body with high exposure rate.

Also, the ribbon on the neck and hair band that imitated rabbit ears.

The Triad's appearances were really similar to Philuffy who he saw the other day. They were standing in front of his room.

「Err. That appearance, don't tell me—?」

「Just as you guessed. The three of us are wearing a costume of a rabbit.」

「What'cha think? Does it look good?」

「Yes. The fault of this costume is the chill due to the season, but we will wear jackets when going outside.」

「That's, even if you ask me how it is—it looks really good on you three.」

To be honest, he was troubled where to look. Though Lux couldn't say it.

Normally he often got his sight stolen by the gorgeous atmosphere of Lisha

and the others, but the Triad were also really charming when they were dressed like this.

「Haa, I'm glaaad! Dressing like this really needs a looot of courage isn't it?」

「Yes. From the aspect of fabric amount, it's not so different from a pilot suit, but it's mysterious how different it is.」

「Fuh, as expected even I am feeling a bit embarrassed. Then, let's go Lux-kun, I'm also looking forward to your turn you know?」

「Ahaha..... then please take care of me.」

Prompted by Sharis and the others who were a bit embarrassed, Lux headed towards the dining hall.

After having a light breakfast of soup and bread, Lux changed into a black suit and headed to the courtyard.

Even though it wasn't a formal party, for some reason he was made to dress like this. He was wondering why, but the reason soon became clear.



「My, ~~mech/hi~~ Goshujin-sama has arrived!」

「As expected from a former prince.」

「You are looking really good there.」

The female students made a fuss and Lux felt a bit ticklish hearing that.

Lux went up on a small stage that was specially set up in the middle of the courtyard, then the headmaster Relie stood beside him and gave a greeting first.

「All students. You have all worked hard with the strict training despite the time being the end of the year. Today, a costume party is opened for the Holy Night Festival, which will also serve as a meager reward for you all. Let's enjoy it to your heart's content!」

Applause could be heard from the students at Relie's short speech.

It seemed that the secret of her popularity was the shortness and neatness of her talk.

「Then, other than wearing costumes and eating snacks, I'll also have Lux-kun to do a special chore for the sake of everyone. It's named—Familiar Selection Convention!」

‘Waaa-’, hearing the event name that Relie mentioned, the girls raised their cheers.

The girls were already wearing costumes, from mere hair bands with ear decorations attached, until those who went as far as attaching a tail or wing. There were a lot of variety.

The idea was for Lux to draw a lottery that had animal names written on it, then choosing work as a familiars for the girls who were dressed the same as the lottery, and then the girls could hand him their presents.

The contents of the event was for those girls to spend time together with Lux inside a room that was similarly decorated and receive orders from him.

The types of animal were ten in total, so it would be quite worth it to choose.

(Even so, to think they will get this kind of idea, really.)

He didn't know whether this was Relie's idea or not, but he was impressed with the freedom of the idea.

「And so, first let's have him draw the first lot.」

Lux who was prompted pulled out a lottery from the box casually.

「Eerr—first there is cat written here.」

「My, you pulled out the biggest bomb there. There are many who dressed like that. Then, you have to be affectionate with them in the Academy's parlor room—」

With Relie's words, a lot of students were rushing, but the Triad somehow held them back.

While Lux's long day was going to start, at the side a girl snugly wearing white robe and hood, with a scribble that looked like face drawn on her mask was staring at that sight.

「My, you are wearing a curious costume there.」

When the female student beside that robed girl called out cheerfully, she looked a bit flustered.

「This is.....yes, a ghost costume. I think.」

Her tone was bland without any inflection, but the female student's expression burst into a smile.

「That's interesting. Aah, even so it's unfortunate that you are getting excluded like that. Even though there is finally a chance to spend a short time with Lux-san.」

「Is that ruined prince, that popular?」

「That nickname sounds nostalgic. I think there is no one who is calling Lux-san like that anymore. Right now he is this Academy's pride after all.」

「.....Is that so? By the way, where is the storage room for Sword Devices again?」

「Yes? The management of Sword Devices should be entrusted to each student themselves though— you are」

「Nothing. I only forgot a bit.」

The white robe said that a bit hurriedly and then quickly left.

「I don't think I've ever heard her voice before.」

The female student who was left behind was tilting her head in confusion, but then she was called by her classmate and joined the banquet.

Part 3

「—Fuu. That was dangerous.」

Soffice, who quickly left from that place, let out a relieved sigh under her mask.

Although it was great and all that she managed to escape from the underground room of the Drag-Ride hangar, she was unable to escape without Vritra's Sword Device, so she was searching for it.

She was also considering to steal a general purpose Drag-Ride from the hangar, but, as expected, even with the merrymaking of this festival, the inspection there was strict, so she gave up on that.

Or rather, as expected, she had a hunch that her Divine Drag-Ride, Vritra wasn't in the hangar.

When she tried thinking from Lux's point of view, it was dangerous to put Soffice's Sword Device in the same building where its owner was being confined.

There, she sneaked into the girl's dormitory next, where she luckily discovered costumes in the hall and borrowed one of them.

There were also makeup tools, but she didn't think she would be able to use them well, so she dressed up as a ghost in the end.

「But, what should I do from here?」

It seemed the reality was that she had to move while assuming that her Sword Device was inside the school building or the girl's dormitory.

And then in that case, it was preferable to first try looking in the rooms of Lux or Airi who were confining Soffice.

In the worst case, she had to threaten Lux or Airi in order to take back Vritra's

Sword Device, but that was the last resort.

「.....I won't hesitate, this time for sure.」

Soffice pilfered a knife for cutting a cake from a table in the courtyard and then she roamed inside the girl's dormitory.

The moment she resolved herself like that, she discovered the figure of a person who she had seen somewhere before.

「Good grief, why is my appearance a bat!? I'm still a princess even like this!」

「Now now, Lisha-sama. For today all the students are leading actresses, and the type of outfit is also limited. Also, that's a vampire, not a bat.」

The person with her blonde hair tied in a side tail that was swaying and prancing was a petite girl wearing a black outfit.

In front of her was a girl in a bunny outfit with a distinctive brown ponytail. She was the owner of the voice that Soffice heard before this in the underground prison.

Soffice had a faint recollection of seeing the two girls from somewhere.

「Can you two spare a bit of time? I want to ask where is the room of Lux Arcadia, or his little sister Airi.」

「Hm.....what's with you? What's your business with Lux?」

「Lux-chi right now is being surrounded by cat girls y'know. Sharis and Noct are managing that place, while I'm taking a break—」

「.....I see, unfortunate.」

Soffice concluded that the young man named Lux was quite popular.

Soffice wasn't asking about the person himself, she just wanted to know where his room was, but there was a risk that she might get found out if she asked too bluntly, so she didn't pursue any further for an answer.

「More importantly, do you two know something about that man? Like, anything particular about him.」

And so, Soffice changed the question.

She thought that if she was lucky, she might understand the place he often visited, and from there she would be able to reach the storage place of her Sword Device.

「Who knows, even though the battle is just around the corner, because of this pact whatever I cannot call out to him now. And yet, he is coming and going inside the Drag-Ride hangar for some reason.」

「But, he came to check on Lisha-sama, right?」

「Well yeah.」

Lisha's cheeks loosened hearing what Tillfur pointed out.

「That guy praised a princess like me whose only ability is to fiddle with Drag-Rides and fight, saying that I'm amazing, helping with my work.」

And then, she continued her words with her arms still folded, an earnest emotion vaguely coloring her tone.

「Even though he usually also has an idiotic side to him, but it feels like I'm losing when he is doing that kind of thing to me.」

「It feels like Lisha-sama is always losing though. Buut, I understand that feeling really well.」

「There's no way—that's true.」

「Eh.....?」

The sudden words of the girl in the ghost costume shocked Lisha and Tillfur.

But, Soffice didn't stop there and spoke in continuation.

「The Arcadia family of that Old Empire, they will only think of themselves. They are that type of creature. All of you are only tricked. He is working to be considered as a hero merely because he needs to do that in order to escape from the threat of the Abyss.」

Lisha blinked in puzzlement for a moment, then she sighed.

「That's a nostalgic criticism. I thought this kind of fellow was no more, looks like I'm wrong.」

「Somehow, she is like Lisha-sama when Lux-chi first came to the Academy

eeh.」

「Tha, that was only at the very beginning though.....」

But, even so, the two weren't swayed.

They just talked to Soffice about Lux as he was, betraying her imagination.

How he was a softhearted person who found it difficult to refuse someone else's request.

But, he would put his life on the line with conviction in order to save everyone.

「Well, I agree that guy is more perverted than I thought. He was also like that when he peeked at me bathing the first time we met, and he also got a lot of further crimes—」

「I also agree with that. That young man is a deviant.」

Soffice who heard Lisha's story immediately responded in agreement.

Then, it was Tillfur who tilted her head in confusion.

「Eeeeh? Did you also get something done to you by Lux-chin? Or rather, which grade are you from? It feels like you are a freshman though.」

「.....This isn't the time for this. I'll go ahead.」

Soffice's heart skipped a beat and she turned around in panic. Then she advanced through the corridor of the girl's dormitory with a small run.

In order to put distance for now from Lisha and Tillfur, she headed to the Academy's school building this time.

—

「Fuu, that was dangerous.」

Soffice was walking in the courtyard while continuing to search inside the Academy ground.

She had come here before during the Campus Festival, so she remembered the outline of the place in general, but she couldn't recall the details.

Above the table that was set up for the standing buffet party, several baked

sweets were placed. Soffice who hadn't eaten very much reflexively reached out her hand.

「.....Nn, tasty.」

The taste was delicious for something that students created.

Or perhaps, she was just feeling nostalgic because she hadn't eaten sweet things for a long time.

Inside the Moon, thanks to synthesized meals, she was able to obtain balanced nutrition, but in general she was unable to eat meals that could be called as proper food.

It was to the degree that the meal Airi brought her inside the prison tasted delicious.

「Aaah, wait there. You are eating too much!」

「-.....!? That's, this is—!?」

Soffice who was stuffing herself under her mask became flustered, but it seemed she was misunderstanding.

「I'm not, eating too much.....you know?」

The girl who was slightly behind her was eating a heap of piled up sweets.

Donuts, apple pie, crepe, cookies, cake, and so on, a girl with soft and fluffy pink hair was continuing to stuff her mouth silently with various sweets.

If she remembered right, this girl should also be someone close to Lux and a user of a Divine Drag-Ride.

Her appearance was lascivious with the rabbit ear hair band and black outfit that was clinging tightly on her skin that she was wearing, but it looked cute when coupled with her innocently childish expression.

「Geez Philuffy, don't just eat, help out here too! Right now there is a talk that an intruder is inside the Academy. It could be that a molester is coming again—」

「.....-!?」

Soffice's body stiffened with a twitch hearing the voice that talked to Philuffy.

「On that topic, the girl over there, you are wearing a mask but, don't tell me.....you aren't a man who came from outside right?」

「I wonder?」

- Jiii*, Philuffy's sleepy looking eyes were directed on Soffice's mask.

When Soffice tried to divert attention from her while slipping away from the side, she stepped on the fabric of her robe that was dangling until under her feet.

「Ah.....!」

Soffice's body that almost stumbled was lightly supported by a single arm.

And then, her mask was slowly shifted up, and eyes with golden pupils were absentmindedly peering onto Soffice's face.

「.....」

A brief silence.

Wondering whether this was a fatal damage to her disguise, Soffice resolved herself inside her heart. Even so Philuffy returned her mask back to its original position as though nothing had happened and faced the other female students.

「This girl, isn't a molester.」

「Is that so? Thanks.」

The girls who seemed to be searching for the intruder left with that.

Soffice was openmouthed in amazement under her mask, but then Philuffy's gaze turned towards the sweets that she was carrying.

「The baked apple, looks tasty.」

「Could it be, you want to eat it?」

「.....」

- Nod*, the pink haired girl—nodded wordlessly to Soffice.

When Soffice handed it to her, Philuffy split it into half and gave it back.

「Thank you, ghost-san.」

「You're welcome, rabbit-san.」

「.....」

She wondered what was with this situation.

Far from getting captured, was she overlooking her here?

Why wasn't this girl getting suspicious of her?

「I want to ask for a bit. Do you know Lux Arcadia's place?」

「Over there but, right now, I cannot go meet Lu-chan from my end.」

The girl was indifferently answering so while eating the baked apple.

「I see.」

「Yes. Lu-chan, is liked by everyone in the Academy after all.」

「.....」

「Because, now he has a lot of proper friends.」

「Friends.....?」

「Yep. I am Lu-chan's first friend.」

Soffice could perceive just a little bit of a soft smile from the expressionless face of Philuffy who muttered that.

『I want friends from the outside world.』

The face of her little sister—Uruk who said that emerged inside Soffice's mind.

Part 4

「Haah, haah! Is Relie-sa.....headmaster here!?!」

「My? What's the matter Airi-chan? Has Lux-kun and Phi got on together I wonder?」

When Airi rushed inside the headmaster's office, Relie who was doing her paperwork in her witch outfit was there.

There were so many things she could make a retort at the statement from just now, but right now wasn't the time for that.

「Soffice Xfer's Sword Device was entrusted to Relie-san right!? She has vanished from the prison underground the Drag-Ride hangar!」

「.....!」

Even Relie understood the situation from the urgent voice of Airi. Her expression immediately turned serious.

「.....I see, so she escaped. When did you notice it?」

「Just now! Today I was busy with the party's preparations, and when I finally went there— Nii-san is in danger! If we don't quickly call and hide him.....」

「Calm down a little Airi-chan. Is there any traces of an intruder from outside? Like the prison being damaged or something.」

「N, no, there is no traces like that. I think that most likely Soffice herself took off the chains.」

「I understand. First, I will try asking the guards around the Academy whether they had seen anyone suspicious, and then, can you gather the Triad for now?」

「Wai-, please be serious! If we let her escape, the New Kingdom's future will be—」

「There is that, but it's useless even if we panic. You and Lux-kun should have

been resolved with the girl escaping like this too when you two took her under your responsibility.」

「—!」

Relie's calm attitude.

It wasn't because she wasn't serious. Airi noticed that it was her acting mature in her own way and she fell silent.

Certainly, it was just as Relie said.

Even Lux and Airi had acknowledged that there was a high possibility of the girl escaping.

「It's strange to say this, but the time while there is an event in progress is also accompanied by danger, so the security in the area should be carried out tightly. Drakes with radar are constantly being alert of the surroundings, so even if it is Dragon Marauder, they won't be able to easily approach.」

「Then, she is still inside the Academy—?」

「Yes, the rest is just as you predicted I believe. She won't be able to summon her Vritra without the Sword Device. In other words, she will be trying to ask someone who knows the location in order to find it, so it will be Airi-chan who is the likeliest to get targeted.」

「I.....see. But, what should I do?」

「Either way, the Sword Device is hidden underground the library, so it won't be found out for now. That's why, I recommend Airi-chan to hide here, but if we want to capture Soffice, then there is also another way.」

- Knock knock*.

At that time the door of the headmaster's office was knocked on.

「Come in. Just in time. If it's him who is from an allied country, there won't be any problem, so let's request him.」

「You are—Coral-san!?!」

「Good afternoon Airi-chan. I'll be in your care again.」

Airi's eyes snapped open in surprise.

The one who was there dressed in a butterfly figure was a beautiful girl—or rather, an androgynous young man.

His light green hair wasn't braided and instead tied up into twintails that drew a curve.

The positioning of his skirt that was doubtfully risqué didn't look out of place on him at all and looked lovely.

「.....Wait, what's with that appearance!?!」

「Sorry. I'll be happier if you don't question that too deeply.....」

Coral muttered with a conflicted gaze that was looking distant.

When Airi listened briefly about why he was here, Coral came to the New Kingdom as Magialca's substitute, but because he came at the timing when the costume party was in progress, it seemed he was toyed around with by the Triad.

Relie's thinking was to talk about the situation this time to Coral who was the aide of the Seven Dragon Paladin of the Vanheim Principality that was allied to them, and asked him to be Airi's guard.

Originally, the matter of Soffice's capture was a top secret even within the New Kingdom, but they couldn't pay attention to outward appearances in this emergency situation.

Airi hesitated a bit before nodding, then she asked for his cooperation.

「But, in a sense this is convenient. It looks like Coral-chan's face is known to Soffice, so if you are dressed like usual you will get found out immediately—」

「Err, headmaster..... Even though I look like this, I am a man though.....?」

After Coral retorted with his face somewhat twitching, they immediately moved into action.

The Triad would be on guard at Lux's surroundings, while Airi and Coral would search for Soffice without getting near Lux as much as possible.

「I'm sorry to involve you Coral-san into this kind of trouble.」

Airi said that while walking in a corridor. Coral shook his head slightly in response.

「I don't mind. Besides, it was you all who first captured Soffice Xfer, so it's not something that I could personally say anything about.」

Coral said that and smiled with the appearance of a female butterfly fairy.

From Airi's view, he wasn't an androgynous male anymore. He looked completely like a female.

「Besides—I'm also curious about the matter of Soffice Xfer.」

「Is that so? Certainly, she is an existence with a lot of mystery but.....」

Airi reflexively replied.

The face of Coral that she saw from the side while walking looked the most serious she had seen until now.

Key's Supervisor
「Xfer.....the successor of the will of the ancient race. And yet, regardless of that, the girl showed no signs of being connected to the Lords at all. I want to know about her circumstances. Just what happened in her past.」

「.....」

「And also, there is no more time for this world. Depending on the situation, we will have to deal with her just as ordered. Even if that is unrelated to my original intention—」

「Coral, san?」

Airi tilted her head in puzzlement. Seeing that Coral's expression let go of his tension.

「Sorry. I'm getting lost in thought. I'll walk a bit away from you, so Airi-chan, can you pretend to search for Lux-kun like just now?」

His aim was to intentionally make Airi to be alone and defenseless, and when Soffice targeted her, he would subdue her then.

Airi who understood the strategy nodded and separated from Coral.

Coral followed behind her while putting his hand on the second Sword Device hanging on his waist.

「In the worst case that Dragon Marauder also came, just EX Wyvern won't be enough. I won't have any other choice but to show my Divine Drag-Ride too.....」

Coral's monologue was vaguely mixed with tension.

It gave a hint that this mission for him wasn't just the cooperation with an allied country.

「Lux-kun. I—」

That murmur which had an uneasy sigh mixed in it wasn't heard by anyone. He blended among the bustling female students walking in the corridor and vanished.

Part 5

Around the same time.

The seventh Ruin, Moon, that was floating in the sky.

Inside a room where there wasn't any light at all despite the time being midday, voices were exchanged inside the darkness.

The people there were three notorious mercenaries—the division commanders of Dragon Marauder.

The strengthening surgery of Baptism was over and they had just accomplished the contract with their new employer.

No, for the three, they had nothing like a true master since the start.

They completely understood that one day they would be dismissed as long as they were mercenaries.

However, that person was an existence that could be called as the great beginning even among the employers of Dragon Marauder.

「.....However, this is astonishing. For me who had seen the great change of many countries in these several years, I won't be surprised anymore by most things, but this is...」

The tall man with tanned skin, the Sky Dragon division commander, Gatouhan, muttered.

Beside him, the woman who dressed like a bandit, Drakkhen, was observing the surroundings and leaked out a sigh.

「It was really surprising. Well, from what I saw, that girl's lifespan doesn't look like it will be that long eh. In that state, it's more like being unable to die even when killed I guess.」

「Is this fine? If we abort our contract with Soffice Xfer and get on board with

her, then even our pride as mercenaries will be gone with this won't it?」

The Earth Dragon division commander, the boy who was still young, Vine, pointed that out calmly.

But, the other two commanders only snorted.

「Betrayal.....huh, you are really young eh, Vine. We ended up turning into bandits originally was because of a large country's high-handedness. Is this hardship story too difficult for a young master I wonder?」

For Drakkhen who was usually aloof, her voice was painted with sarcasm.

Vine had also been told since the past about her history of misfortune.

She possessed a rarely-seen talent as a Drag-Knight, yet she was shunned by the incompetent commander of her country and got used as a sacrificial pawn along with her subordinates.

In the end she was captured and almost got tortured, but before that happened she was picked up by the previously mentioned employer.

「I know about your story. Besides, even I had also met quite an experience myself. After all even though I look like this, I'm a former royalty who almost got assassinated.」

Vine also replied without any change in his tone.

「We don't have any other place to live at. Even though we managed to escape from our original place, we cannot forgive them. There was no proper path provided to us since the start. Nowhere at all.」

「Yeah. And then, there is also no one else who provided us with help.....right? Those guys only need us as disposable troops. Just like my clan that got massacred as a savage tribe despite being the ones who had been living in that land since the past.」

「.....」

The three fell silent and shared their past with each other.

Their place to belong was stolen from them due to the convenience of the people in authority. While they were Drag-Knights with first class talent, they

were existences that couldn't live a proper life.

That was the essence of Dragon Marauder, the fate of the three division commanders.

「That's why. We will move to the ruling side. Those guys who treated us as trash and used us as convenient pawns, I'll give them the scare of their life. I'll beat the fact that this world isn't theirs into them!」

The yell that was filled with a flood of emotions kept the other two silent.

Right after silence filled the place, Gatouhan gazed at his remaining two comrades once more.

「But, I won't ask for you two to go along with my revenge too. I'll leave it to you what you will do when we get cornered. I'll say this first, if you want to run away then tell me. I don't want to drag even you two into the power of my Divine Drag-Ride.」

After he said that with a severe tone, the bandit styled woman standing at the side sighed in exasperation.

「This man, what the hell are you saying this late.」

「Yeah, it's too late already.」

「Even I more or less have a sense of responsibility as someone who is starting up something.」

Gatouhan smiled wryly at the words of Drakkhen and Vine.

「If you are saying that you are taking responsibility, then keep us company until the end of hell. Fight till the end without throwing us away or running away.」

「I also feel the same Gatouhan. Even an existence like me who wasn't wished for by anyone wants to perish together with my comrades at the end. When that time comes, add me into your strength without reservation.」

「.....Then let's go, gather all our remaining forces. From here on, we're going to fight against the world.」

- Click*, at that moment, light shined inside the room.

When they stood up, it could be seen that their faces had a tattoo with strange pattern.

It was the sign of the secret art called Baptism that familiarized the body with Elixir, just like what was done to Yoruka in the past.

『The remaining amount of energy isn't reassuring. I'll be controlling the Moon, so I'm not gonna join the battle this time, you mongrels.』

A voice came towards the three from the ceiling that was made from silver planks.

Their first employer.

And then, an existence that could move the Moon even now when the Xfer and Automata were gone.

「We don't intend to bother client-dono's hand. In exchange we want you to keep your promise. At the dawn when you obtain Avalon—」

『I get it. Either way I don't have time, you guys split the treasure among yourself.』

Light ran on the vast wall surface inside of the Moon at the same time with the person's voice. A geometrical pattern emerged.

Dull and heavy sound of moving mechanism resounded, and the Ruin began to advance.

『—I won't be satisfied unless I crush that false prince and that New Kingdom bunch with my own hands. As long as I can accomplish that, I don't give a damn to what happens to this world.』

The three shivered slightly at the low voice that was filled with hatred.

Drakkhen muttered with a bit of fear in her.

「Seeing from the side, an avenger is really troublesome eh.」

The Moon was flying above the New Kingdom.

In order to strike despair towards the battlefield that hadn't come into view yet.

Part 6

「Haa, this Academy is too lively as usual desu. It feels like I'll become a lost child desu. Geez.....」

While Soffice was disguising herself as a ghost to search for her Sword Device inside the Academy, one more intruder was walking inside the Academy at the side.

The Automata with fox ears growing on her head, Re Plica.

Drakes with radar were on guard against the surrounding, but thinking that the security wouldn't be that suspicious against visitors, Re Plica succeeded in infiltrating from the front gate by disguising herself as a little sister of a student.

She wasn't carrying a Sword Device or a horn flute, so she didn't get found out by Drake, but there was a high possibility that she would get exposed if she stayed for long.

The treatment of Baptism towards Dragon Marauder had ended safely.

It might become a battle after this in order to recover Soffice, but in that case her master would become hostage and be put in danger.

Thus, Re Plica came alone here a step ahead to search for Soffice.

「That Soffice, she is really a handful desu.....」

For Re Plica who was an Automata, her master's order was essentially absolute.

After she got ordered to stay in the Moon, she had the duty to obey that.

But, right now she wasn't doing that.

Due to her, her base personality was gradually tampered with, and she was programmed to have a mental structure of an even closer relationship with Soffice.

That was why, for her, rather than such promise, she wanted to save Soffice's life.

It wasn't just because she was the Ruin's Gear Leader, but it was also her own wish.

「There might be an intruder, is it..... This is only a maybe, but could it be...」

While walking in a corridor, such voices suddenly entered her ears.

A girl with blue hair was looking down outside the window. She was the aide of the Ymir Theocracy's Seven Dragon Paladin, Krulcifer.

‘This is bad’, thinking that, Re Plica immediately hid her ears and attempted to pass through beside her.

Krulcifer should have no acquaintance with her appearance like this, but in the slightest chance that she was addressed—

「Say, you over there.」

「Yes. What is it desu? Ah—!？」

Re Plica noticed her carelessness and pressed her hands on her mouth.

With her nature as a Ruin's Gear Leader, she would obey a Xfer unconditionally.

「I heard that there is an intruder and thought that could it be, but it looks like you are the real thing if you are unable to go against my words.」

「No, that's—even so I cannot betray Soffice desu! Because she is also a Xfer!」

Even when she acted rebelliously with a firm tone, she relaxed when her head got patted.

「It's not like I'm intending to obstruct your work. Recently Lux-kun would often come and go from the hangar's underground, so I was anxious whether he was meeting with someone there, but—with this I somehow understand the reason.」

Yes.

Just because there was a pact among Lisha and the others, it didn't mean that they stopped paying attention to Lux.

They thought in their own way and probed if it was possible.

「If, it's just as I imagined, and Soffice Xfer is here, I wish to cooperate. I might be able to understand a little of the feeling of hers who is alone in this world.」

「Will you, become Soffice's friend desu? For her—」

Re Plica recalled the wish that Soffice's little sister, Uruk had and muttered.

「That will depend on your master, but I intend to handle it to the best of my ability. In exchange, can you tell me? Why does she hate the Arcadia family and call them traitors—」

「That's.....」

When Re Plica was about to say something with a hoarse voice, the sound of footsteps running quickly in the corridor could be heard.

「Wait, you won't be able to escape again!」

A figure wearing a white robe and mask, and a girl wearing a fairy costume chasing after it.

That pursuit which at a glance looked like a scene of a play possessed bloodcurdling seriousness.

「That's Sir Coral of the Vanheim Principality?」

「The ghost just now is Soffice desu! If I don't chase her—」

「Yes, let's hurry.」

Krulcifer nodded and started running inside the Academy together with Re Plica.

Their destination was the back of the Academy, connecting to the direction of the practice ground.

Part 7

「Kuh..... How careless of me, to be caught with a simple method like that.」

Soffice who was running to outside the school building felt that she was being cornered.

Coral intentionally didn't close the distance all at once. He was chasing after her while maintaining a fixed distance that wasn't too near or too far.

It was too cramped to summon a Drag-Ride indoors, and even if he summoned one he wouldn't be able to move it satisfactorily.

Thus, he was trying to chase her towards the direction of the practice ground. Soffice could see that.

Most likely he was also being careful in case Dragon Marauder was also sneaking in.

There was no hesitation and opening in Coral Esther's movements.

「.....No, it wasn't that I got caught in the enemy's trap. It was inevitable from the start.」

In order to escape with her own strength, Soffice had to find Vritra's Sword Device.

If Airi was walking alone, then she would have no choice but to capture her and question her about its location.

Coral splendidly aimed at that.

「Is this, the end?」

Soffice's arms and legs were starting to tremble.

Even though she should have been resolved to get killed when she declared war on the world, she was overrun by fear now when she was facing death in the face.

「—In the end, I was unable to hear even a single bad rumor about that young man.」

Unexpectedly, but escaping and hiding in the Academy, she was able to interact with the girls in the Academy who were close to Airi and Lux, but from them she only heard that those siblings were good people.

「—However, I won't repeat the same mistake.」

Even the people of the Old Empire, at first they were valuing her and Uruk highly.

They were courteously treating them as Xfer, the indispensable existences for dealing with the Ruins.

But in the past, within Garden, they tried to rule over the world as dictators.

Uruk was killed when she tried to stop it.

It was trivial.

According to the past history, they should be able to get along well with the descendants of the Lord, but Soffice and Uruk couldn't become friends with them.

The imperial family of the Old Empire literally only thought of them as keys for opening the treasure warehouse of the Ruin.

「As the last remaining Xfer, I must not get betrayed anymore.」

On the route from the Academy that was heading to the practice ground, she headed towards the nearby waiting room.

It was locked, so she circled to the back. But there, a death god for Soffice had been waiting.

「.....That appearance, it suites you more than I thought.」

「I see, then that's good. After all, it means that the surrounding's perception isn't mistaken.」

Coral Esther who was already wearing his EX Wyvern was looking down on Soffice with a cool gaze.

Soffice was running out of breath from sprinting all the way here. A Sword

Device's tip was pointed to her when she sat down on the ground.

「Please, I want you to change your mind. It's too dangerous to let you live in this situation.」

「You can kill me. Even though you intentionally pursued me alone, with that intention. Liar.」

「.....」

Coral couldn't reply back at what Soffice pointed out.

In other words, it showed that it was just as Soffice said.

「Liar, huh.....」

Coral who heard her words shut up for a moment with a gloomy expression.

However, the next moment any expression vanished from his face and he lifted up his Blade.

The moment Soffice closed her eyes tightly, a running sound came.

「Don't! Coral!」

- Claang!* Sharp metallic sound echoed, but there was no pain in Soffice's body.

When she opened her eyes fearfully, there Lux with a Wyvern covering only half his body was blocking the Blade's attack.

「Lux, kun.....?」

The eyes of Coral who was seeing that opened wide in surprise.

On the other hand, Lux, who was still wearing a suit, was breathing hard.

A high speed Drag-Ride summoning by discarding the chant.

Lux who noticed the commotion and rushed here midway stopped the attack just barely—

「—I'm glad, I made it in time.」

「What, do you mean?」

Soffice murmured in a daze. Lux turned towards her and muttered.

「I heard from Krulcifer-san. The Moon's Automata came here to search for you. Even though there is a risk of her getting captured in the middle, she said that she doesn't want to respond to negotiations with you still being a hostage.」

While talking, Re Plica along with Krulcifer showed up from behind.

There wasn't any change in her breathing, but she was standing still with a desperate expression.

「I'm sorry desu, Soffice.....」

「.....」

「These people are surely, not bad people desu. I cannot tell you to trust again, not after you lost your little sister desu. But—」

While looking down, even so Re Plica squeezed out her voice.

「I want you to at least have a talk with them with your true opinion desu. Because, that should be what both you and your little sister Uruk wished for all this time desu.....」

「——」

Soffice fell silent for a while at Re Plica's pleading.

But, when she saw that not even one of the members of Syvalles who gathered here after noticing the commotion was trying to reach for their weapon, she sighed quietly and threw away the cake knife that she was secretly carrying.

At the same time, she took off the white robe she was wearing and went back to her usual ethnic tribe appearance.

「Understood, I surrender. However, I have no intention to cooperate with you all. I'll only stop the threat of using the Moon.」

After hearing that, Lux used a rope for decoration to restrain Soffice's arms.

It seemed that everyone around also stopped being tense and relieved sighs could be heard.

「To think that the Moon incident would be settled in the middle of this Holy

Night Festival party.」

「Yes. It was the correct action to not lose focus.」

「Lisha-sama and also Celis-senpai, you two aren't persuasive at all with that appearance y'know?」

Tillfur made fun of the words of the serious two who were dressed as a bat and a dog. The place's atmosphere was softened.

「It's unfortunate. If only I received healing from the 『hibernation pod』, I would be able to be a bit more useful.」

「If you acted, it feels like the matter will be settled quickly in the opposite meaning, so it's scary though..... Either way, it was great that she wasn't harmed.」

「Right. Especially missy Krulcifer, you did great noticing the Automata girl.」

The talk of Yoruka who gave a hint of a dangerous atmosphere with a smile was followed by Krulcifer and Sharis next.

Krulcifer's response to this matter was calm and swift as usual, but it also looked like she was glad inside her heart that she was able to save her brethren.

「Should we, keep watch by turn? Lu-chan seems busy after all.」

「It will be helpful if Philuffy-san can do that for us. After all it's possible Dragon Marauder or another enemy might come attacking.」

「Yes. Then Lux-san, please return to the party. We will properly set up a place for you to talk with her again.」

After Philuffy made a suggestion with an absentminded tone, Airi agreed with it and Noct concluded the talk.

The elites of Syvalles each had a strong personality and status, but they were reliably managed with Lux at the center.

After that, Lux allowed himself to presume on everyone's kindness and returned to the party. During that time Airi explained the course of events until now to Lisha and the others.

The matter of Soffice asking Airi to cooperate in order to liberate the Ruin of

Garden.

Then how Magialca attempted to obstruct that and laid out a trap. She battled Soffice and brought her down.

The matter of hiding Soffice underground the Drag-Ride hangar and their attempt to have a dialogue with her.

And then now, the escape attempt was foiled, and the duo of the Moon who declared war on the world—The Key's Supervisor Soffice and the Automata Re Plica were together here came to light.

After that, Soffice and Re Plica were brought back to the prison underground the hangar, and they would be made to wait until the costume party was over but—

「Before this, it was intentional wasn't it?」

Soffice muttered with a small volume to Coral who was helping with taking her to the underground prison.

「What do you mean?」

「You didn't intend to kill me. Even without Lux coming, you would have stopped just before it hit.」

「.....That's not really true. Even though I planned to stop, but I didn't know whether I would really be able to stop or not. At the very least, if Lux-kun didn't come, the worst case might have occurred.」

「Then, why did you play that farce?」

If he didn't intend to kill Soffice from the start, then there wasn't any need to slash at her with Blade.

Coral put his hand on his chin in response to that question of Soffice and thought for a while before speaking.

「I also don't really understand. But surely, I'm the same as you.」

「The same, like me?」

「I wanted to see what will Lux-kun do. Perhaps.....」

「.....」

Coral only said that and left quietly from there.

After that, the Holy Night Festival party progressed peacefully without any big trouble.

Part 8

「Today we were able to make really good memories. Then, all the students, let's begin cleaning up.」

The time of dusk that was slightly faster in the midwinter.

After Relie gave her speech from the stage in the courtyard, a wave of cheers was spreading out.

Deeply religious students would head to the monastery at Cross Field after this to offer prayers before quietly passing the night in the girl's dormitory. That was the custom.

Lux also received a lot of presents from the female students, but he stored them in the warehouse.

He also received presents from Lisha and the others, along with their respective feelings, but due to the urgency of the matter with Soffice, he planned to open them at another time.

「Nii-san. Cleaning up the Academy is also important, but please help out with here.」

After helping out with several physical tasks, he was called by Airi.

Lux parted with the female students and changed into his uniform, then he headed towards the basement of the Drag-Ride hangar.

The party had ended safely, but in a sense the fight of the two would enter the main part from here.

Soffice and Re Plica.

The duo of the Ruin who proclaimed war on the world. They had to persuade them after this.

「Even so, are you serious Nii-san?」

Airi was uneasy while preparing for the talk.

Before coming here, she stopped by at the library within the Academy's ground and took something.

Airi was scared to use it for the negotiation material.

「Yes. It can't be helped..... But, I think she isn't a bad person. In order to make her understand, I also have to resolve myself. If she wouldn't respond with this, at that time—」

When Lux said that, he tightly grasped the sheath of his Wyvern's Sword Device.

He would have to hold back Soffice, a powerful person who was a member of the Seven Dragon Paladins by himself.

Hangar basement—when they entered the prison through the hidden passage, Soffice was standing there with a rope fastened on her.

She was waiting for Lux and Airi along with Re Plica who was in the same state like her.

「I'm sorry to have made you wait. Then, will you talk? About what the two of you know—」

「.....If you give back my Vritra, then I won't mind talking.」

Seeing Soffice talking brusquely, Lux smiled wryly.

「In this situation, my life is being held in your hands. Like this it's impossible to talk as equals, am I wrong?」

「You are saying that desu, Soffice.....? Even though you were the one who first threatened them using Moon..... ouch!?!」

While still being tied with rope, Soffice stepped on the foot of the Automata who was retorting from the side.

Soffice took a deep breath, then she faced Lux and Airi with her usual indifferent serious look.

「I'll say this first, I have no intention to cooperate and hand over the Ruin to you. I just won't attack the New Kingdom, is that fine with you?」

No change in emotion could be sensed from there, but it was enough with just her responding to his talk like this.

「Of course. For now, I want to hear your story. Did something happen in the past between you and the Old Empire?」

「No, in the first place, are you two living in the same time period as us?」

Airi matched Lux and added a further question.

Soffice fell silent for a while seemingly in hesitation, then before long she began to form her words.

「Conversely, there is one thing that we want to ask you first. You two, the descendants of the empire family really don't know anything? About what the Old Empire did ten years ago too. And also about the matter of the family of traitors.」

「We too wish you will quickly teach us about why you are calling us the family of traitors though. Even though we have no recollection of betraying anything, being called like that continuously is also vexing.」

Airi said that with a bit of dissatisfaction, then Lux continued after her.

「When we were children, we were distanced from the center of government, so we weren't that knowledgeable about the Old Empire's wrongdoings. Especially about the matter with you that seemed to be done in secret, it's not even remaining in records.」

「.....」

「Soffice. I think these people aren't lying desu. They don't even have any need to do that.」

When Soffice who kept looking at Lux's eyes was keeping silent, Re Plica beside her prompted her.

「Understood」 saying that as the beginning, Soffice began to talk bit by bit.

About her first half of her life since she was awakened in the Moon as a Xfer.

「I woke up inside a hibernation pod in the Moon and passed several years inside the Ruin. The way to use Drag-Rides, how to control the Abyss, how to

use the Moon's functions, I learned those from the Automata Re Plica. It seemed that I was awakened because my state of preservation was getting worse, but other than that it was also for carrying out my most important mission.」

「The mission of the Key's ^{Xfer} Supervisor—the one who manages the Ruins. Essentially what kind of mission is it?」

Airi asked in the place of Krulcifer who wasn't here.

Soffice closed her eyes as though recalling it keenly, then she continued her words.

「The Lords, are those who were entrusted with the Ruins. The Key's Supervisor, is the ancient race that brought about the Ruins. Those people who created the Ruins themselves were the clan of ^{Key's Supervisor} Xfer of the far ancient era. The clan called Xfer isn't blessed with many offspring and they were few in number, but they possessed extraordinary talent and knowledge. In addition to that, they also further received special education growing up.」

「But, Soffice didn't receive that education desu. That's why despite being a Xfer, she is a bit disappointing like this—ouch ouch ouch-! Wait, stop stepping on my foot from the side with that serious look desu!」

With unchanging serious look, Soffice stepped on Re Plica's foot with all her might from the side. Lux and Airi smiled wryly.

Their figures interacting with each other despite one being an Automata that should be loaded with a pseudo personality seemed like the exchange between real sisters.

「Our talk diverted. However, our clan of Xfer, in contrast with that development of technological strength, our numbers were decreasing and we were getting cornered. Our clan was persecuted and even our own country treated us hostilely.」

「Did they, do something bad? Why did they meet that kind of experience—」

Airi asked with a dubious expression. Soffice answered indifferently without even a twitch in her expression.

「They didn't do anything. They only improved their technology and earned money from that. And yet the surrounding nations ganged up and cornered the Xfer. That is what is written in the record.」

「.....」

Lux imagined that event.

The reason why those girls who were only developing technology got shunned—

「Could it be, their surroundings were jealous of them?」

- Nod*, Soffice simply nodded wordlessly.

「In short, those people envied their technological strength desu. Both common people and the people in charge attempted to take away their fortune and technology desu. In order to escape from that, the Xfer clan moved from place to place. They continued a long, long travel that felt beyond counting, and then finally—the clan encountered people who recognized them desu.」

「Was that the Holy Arcadia Empire.....the clan of the Lords?」

Airi muttered seriously. Silence filled inside the prison.

After everyone there once more mutually recognized the history of the two clans that had been together since ancient times, Soffice resumed the story.

「The Arcadia Empire was a really small and weak island country, but as a result of its royalty welcoming the Xfer and supporting them, their might was increasing. They mined the meteorite from the nearby sea, took out the raw ore of Mithrildite and Force Core, and began to process it. In this world, that kind of huge meteorite wreckages existed in several places.」

Lux thought that perhaps, the Ruins were places to process those huge meteorites.

「Time flowed further from there. Before they knew it, the Arcadia Empire was convinced that they possessed armed might that was unrivaled. They expanded towards the world searching for even better land. At that point in time, several existing Ruins were used as moving fortresses.」

「.....」

「They secured positioning at the center of the vast continent, pushed their way through undeveloped lands using Drag-Rides and cultivated those places. With that—the end.」

「Eh.....?」

Lux reflexively raised his voice at the sudden end of the story.

Airi was also agitated. She leaned forward with eagerness.

「The end you said—why did the Holy Arcadia Empire get destroyed? Even though they were monopolizing the technology of the Ruins...」

「I also don't know the details. It might be a top secret matter even between the Lords and the Key's Supervisors. But, the available records only go that far. Just, it seems that after that some kind of large revolution occurred. At that time, the Arcadia Empire clearly segregated the class of the nobles and the citizens. Discrimination occurred. And then what happened to those citizens—」

「Was our ancestor, was it.....」

Soffice nodded at Lux's muttering.

At the same time Lux couldn't help but felt like he had heard something bad.

The segregation that the Arcadia Empire put between the nobles and the citizens, some people then unified the citizens and caused an uprising. Those people were called as the 『Family of Traitors』.

「Nii-san..... Could it be, this is—」

Lux's thought also concluded the same like Airi's uneasiness.

He didn't know the details except from what he heard from Soffice's story, but that Hayes who was at the Heiburg Republic was having some kind of fixation towards Lux.

And then, from how she was calling him as a false prince, there was a high possibility that she had extraordinary relationship with the ancestors of Lux and Airi.

There was a possibility that a revolution occurred within the Arcadia Empire

due to the people's uprising.

「During that time, we, the survivors of the Xfer, went to sleep for a long time before waking up.」

While Lux and Airi were imagining about their origin, Soffice was slowly continuing her story.

「Ten years ago, I encountered the imperial family of the Old Empire Arcadia that was also the relatives of you two. My little sister was looking for friends. Most likely, the mission of the Xfer that had been reduced to a few remaining numbers was to protect the Ruins, and to increase our numbers again. For that reason, my little sister wished for interaction with other people. She wished for people who will understand and accept us.」

「.....」

Lux who was treated coldly even while being an imperial family member understood well that feeling.

The lonely environment where one couldn't obtain other people's understanding despite being in a special position.

He was happy right now being surrounded by everyone in the Academy, but that was exactly why that period where he was starving for such things felt even stronger.

「However, there a fatal breakdown in relationship occurred, didn't it? The bones of a girl in that Garden, could that be.....」

Airi recalled the happening of the other day while muttering.

When they headed to the Ruin Garden to hide the Grand Force by the New Kingdom's order, they found human bones with a broken skeleton buried under the ground.

「Those guys of the Old Empire Arcadia, they used us to unlock the seal of the Ruins and planned to make the world their own. My little sister who noticed that rejected it—she got killed and I was also injured seriously. I slept inside the hibernation pod in order to hide myself while applying the remodeling called Baptism to my body, changing the color of my skin and hair. After that, I was

merely acting in accordance with my mission. I won't hand over Avalon to the villains that will destroy this world. The family of traitors too, none of them can be trusted. Believing that.....」

「——」

It seemed the story was over with that. Silence visited inside the prison.

Soffice woke up inside the Moon as a survivor of the Xfer.

She tried to search for comrades who would recognize them due to her little sister's wish.

She met with the Old Empire's betrayal and lost her little sister. Now she tried to protect Avalon by herself.

「Nii-san. What are you going to do? With the two of them here, most likely there is nobody who can move the Ruin.」

Lux silently nodded at Airi's words.

「Perhaps so. I don't know what will happen if the Lords interfered, but I think that also won't happen. If they could easily discover Moon, then they should have done so since a long time ago.」

「If you're going to kill me then do as you like. I too did everything with the resolve to die. Either way it's impossible that the world alliance will pardon me.」

Soffice talked indifferently with an expressionless look, however Lux shook his head slightly.

「Can I, ask you to promise one thing? After this I'll go to consult Captain Magialca after the Holy Night Festival is over. If with that I'm able to guarantee your life, will you cooperate then?」

「—!?!」

Soffice's eyes that were tinged with emptiness snapped open in surprise.

「You will help desu!?!」

Re Plica who had even more abundant emotion than a human raised her voice. Seeing that Airi was flustered.

「Wait a second Nii-san! Please don't say anything absurd. Even if it's Nii-san that's impossible. That kind of promise without due consideration—」

「That's obviously impossible. If you are going to lie, then you should make up something more believable.」

Soffice was similarly acting negative, but Lux asserted without any hesitation.

「That's why I also cannot say anything certain. However, that's the only option that has possibility. Either way it's most important that the Ruin moves with the power of you two. There is also the matter of Ragnarok. With that, it might also be possible to curry favor with the world alliance and write off the crime of the war declaration.」

「What does Nii-san, mean?」

Airi tilted her head in puzzlement. Lux took a deep breath and answered.

「In order to take out the remaining Grand Forces, we have to defeat two Ragnarok no matter what. However, originally the damage to do that will be impossible to predict.」

It felt like normal Drag-Knights would be completely useless against them, and even if users of Divine Drag-Rides were gathered, if they made even the slightest mistake then there was a risk of total annihilation.

「But, if you two are able to annihilate the Ragnarok, it will be possible to eliminate almost the whole burden for all the countries.」

「Giving an order to the two Ragnarok to defeat each other.....that's what Nii-san means. Certainly, if that can be done, then the world alliance might be convinced too. And then, if the Abyss in the abandoned capital of the Marcafal Kingdom can also be eliminated without problem like that—」

「We will be able to reach Avalon in the remaining two months time. What do you think?」

「.....」

Soffice was silently listening to Lux's suggestion for a while, but before long she opened her mouth with a murmur.

「Didn't you listen to what I first said? I have no intention to trust anyone else

anymore. As a survivor of the Xfer, I must not fail. Even so, if you at least would spare my life, I would talk about the facts that I know. I have fulfilled that with this.」

She gazed at Lux with an indifferent gaze that showed no emotion.

If Soffice was executed like this, in the end Avalon would fall into someone else's hands. She should know that, even so it seemed that she was unable to cooperate even then.

After a moment of pause, Lux silently took a breath.

「I got it. But, before the Holy Night Festival is over, I'll come again to persuade you. Before that I'll get an agreement from Lady Magialca.」

「.....No matter how many times you come, it will be the same.」

「Even so, I won't give up.」

Lux smiled at Soffice who was somewhat perplexed.

「I don't know what I should do to make you trust me, but I'll try to do what I can do. After all, that's the only thing I can do.」

「.....」

「Why—are you struggling that much desu? Shouldn't you ignore the likes of us already and quickly go to search for the Ruin desu?」

In the place of the silent Soffice, Re Plica asked Lux.

In response, the little sister who knew her big brother really well also answered in his place.

「That's because Nii-san is like this. He is really a difficult person. He is always giving me trouble.」

「.....Wait, Airi!?!」

「But, if he wasn't like this, he wouldn't have tried to change the Old Empire or anything. Whether it was polishing his skills with the Drag-Ride, or advising the emperor at that time, and even destroying the Old Empire— Even if it was a path that was nearly impossible, Nii-san didn't give up in creating a place for us to belong.」

「.....」

Lux who received Soffice's gaze thought for a while before telling her.

「Fugil of the Lords told me. I who was ostracized by both the imperial family and the people merely tried to become loved by anyone. He said that I have no caliber as a king with no resolve to abandon or kill anyone.」

Philuffy taught him the answer to that.

His admiration towards the acts of the girls who saved him from isolation even without any authority or strength.

Lux believed that was to be his benchmark in saving the country.

「What my elder brother said might not be wrong. Perhaps the truth is that I merely wanted to escape from the environment where everyone hates me. Even so, right now there are a lot of comrades who I can trust around me. That's why, I can keep fighting from now on too. Even if it might be mistaken, I can continue to reach out my hand towards someone else.」

「.....」

「Thank you for not harming anyone in the Academy and Airi. I'll come again later to persuade you.」

「Excuse us.」

Lux finished speaking with that and left. Airi also followed after him.

And then, silence visited the underground prison at the end of the hidden passage.

Part 9

「Soffice, what will we do from now desu?」

One supervisor, and one Automata.

Re Plica asked her master inside the prison under the hangar where there were only the two of them.

「.....About what?」

Soffice didn't move in the slightest with both her arms in shackles.

There was no emotion at all in her expression. It even looked like she was wearing a mask.

「Those people, aren't bad people desu.」

「I heard that before.」

「The people of Syvalles, all of them are good natured people.」

「I know. I met several people while here, I talked to them.」

Soffice replied indifferently.

Even so there was no emotion mixed at all in her voice.

「How about trying to trust one more time desu? Soffice was always alone all this time desu! You were betrayed by the imperial family of the Old Empire, lost your little sister, even so in order to fulfill your mission as a Key's Supervisor, you stifled down just about all your emotions desu.」

「My mission is already over. I've done everything that I can. After this, the only opposition that I can do, is to not hand over Avalon to the enemy so easily.」

「You lie desu! Even though the truth is—you want comrades more than anyone! You are only running away because you are scared to get hurt desu!」

「.....Uruk, my little sister died for the sake of the Key's Supervisor's mission. She persisted in her wish for peace and died. If I got tricked here because I want comrades, she would have died for nothing.」

「Soffice.....」

「This is fine, Re Plica. It's not like I'm cursing my fate. Just— those siblings are really interesting. They were like us in the past, it's nostalgic.」

The always expressionless Soffice showed a faint emotion.

Re Plica was about to say something in response to that, but in that moment a sound resounded inside the prison.

- GAN GAN GAN GAN-!*

High pitched bell sound was ringing repeatedly with terrific speed.

Even Soffice who was ignorant of the New Kingdom's regulation immediately noticed the meaning of that bell sound.

「Abyss attack? This late at night?」

「No, the way they rang the bell isn't normal desu. Don't tell me, this is—」

Right after Re Plica muttered that nervously, a magnified voice due to a Drake's functions could be heard.

『Emergency! Students are to gather towards the hangar right away! It's an emergency situation! The silhouette of Moon and a large swarm of the Abyss appeared inside the Academy grounds! Uguh, a.....!』

The voice was cut off in the middle. The scream of a man who seemed to be a guard Drag-Knight drowned it over.

「——」

The content of those words that were hard to believe made Soffice and Re Plica exchange gazes.

「What, does this mean? Did you, move the Moon?」

「I moved it a bit but, I didn't let out any Abyss desu! Or rather, how did the Moon come until the Academy even though the Key's Supervisor and the Gear

Leader me aren't there desu!?!」

「I don't know..... Even if Krulcifer discovered the Moon's location, she shouldn't know how to operate it. If there was anyone who knew that much.....」

「It's also possible this is just a diversion you know desu? Like Dragon Marauder releasing faulty information to save us—」

At that time when they were starting to discuss various possibilities, there was sound coming from outside the prison.

「.....That's also an interesting method but, unfortunately this time it's different.」

The door was opened with creaking sound along with a joking smile.

「We came to save you incompetent supervisor-sama. My bad but, our contract with you ends here. From here on we will obey the instructions of our first employer.」(Drakkhen) There, three Dragon Marauders were standing while carrying Airi who lost consciousness.

In addition, even further behind them, a girl wearing a black robe and clad with an ominous aura was standing.

The curtains of a frenzied stage was raised at the end of the tranquil Holy Night Festival.

Episode 6 – Marauder and Demise

Part 1

「What is this, just what in the world is going on!?!」

「Calm down! Students who can fight, draw your swords! First get out of the building and wear your Drag-Rides!」

Tillfur was raising a loud voice in bewilderment. Besides her, Sharis was also anxious while also raising her voice.

The Academy's girl's dormitory, late at night.

In front of the girls who were enjoying the passing night of the Holy Night Festival, hell manifested suddenly.

Various Abyss suddenly appeared inside the girl's dormitory and they began to destroy the inside of the building fiercely.

It was an abnormality that visited without any advance notice.

Bearing Soffice's case in mind, Sharis and the others were on guard against surprise attacks from Dragon Marauder, but as expected they couldn't completely hide their anxiety.

「Where is Noct!? Have her grasp the situation around here with Drake's radar and request Syvalles to sortie! At this rate we are going to get annihilated!」

Sharis swallowed the scream of terror that was threatening to squeeze out from her throat and gave an order with a firmness that befitted her status as a leader.

But, the situation was worsening by the second.

Finally the Abyss bit a hole into a room of a sleeping female student and swallowed a girl inside.

「.....-!? Stop! Let go of her!」

「It's impossible Sharis! We won't be able to do anything without our Drag-Rides!」

Sharis pulled out her Sword Device and she was going to slash, but Tillfur clung on her and stopped her.

Sharis bit her lower lip hard until it bleed. Then she went out to the entrance of the atrium from the girl's dormitory's corridor and drew out her Sword Device.

「—Come, the winged dragon of crest that is the symbol of power. Obey my sword and soar, EX Wyvern!」

「—Come, the dragon that symbolizes immortality. Turn into a chain of earth fang, EX Wyrn!」

Both of them wore the strengthened type general purpose Drag-Rides that they were barely able to use due to Lisha's tuning.

The energy consumption was intense and it was disadvantageous for protracted battles, but in order to overturn the current hopeless situation, they wanted as much power as possible even if just for a little more.

「Noct! Where are you!? Is Airi-chan safe!?!」

「.....Y.e.s. She is safe. I secured her.」

Sharis and Tillfur were relieved hearing the familiar voice and turned around.

But, the moment they saw that sight, they froze.

「No,ct?」

「Airi, chan.....?」

It was Noct there.

But, the girl's features were obviously different from the usual her.

There was no trace at all of her expression that was taciturn but intelligent.

Her face was tinged with emptiness while her pupils were shaking like a pendulum.

She wasn't wearing a Drake, but black tentacles were growing from her back as though a parasite Abyss was in her.

And then, the girl who was wearing uniform was carefully holding something in her arms. It was the head—of the girl who should be her roommate and her best friend.

「What's wrong? Where is Lux-san? Let's gather everyone quickly. If they become like this then—nobody else will be killed.」

「—U, AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!」

Cold sweat oozed out from the whole body of Sharis and Tillfur along with a shriek.

Some kind of Abyss acted as a parasite in Noct and broke her heart.

Lux's little sister Airi was killed.

She was beyond help already.

They didn't have any face to look at them anymore.

She would have to deal with her important childhood friend who had stayed by her side as a servant until now with her own hands.

Ruled by that despair and resentment, Sharis swung up her Drag-Ride's Blade following her impulse.

「What are you doing Sharis? Please return to your senses.」

「Stop! Stop it! I don't want! Something like this—!」

Sharis swung down her EX Wyvern's Blade as though to reject the reality.

However it didn't cut down Noct's neck. Something deflected it from the side.

「—Stop it both of you! That is a fake!」

A faint green light entered their sight along with a sharp voice.

『.....Perception, change.』

Right after that, the field of vision of Sharis and Tillfur warped flabbily and the

surroundings returned to the corridor of the girl's dormitory that was still pristine.

「Wha-.....!?!」

「Wha, what's going on!?!」

The sight until now that was like a nightmare changed and returned to the proper world.

Even the room that looked like it was broken into now actually only had its wall dented a little.

And then, Noct who was in front of them didn't look odd anywhere except that she had her Sword Device drawn out while taking a stance.

「What.....happened?!」

Noct also muttered with a dumbfounded tone.

When they noticed and looked closer, although the warning sound of the bell tower could be heard, the girl's dormitory was exactly like normal.

「You all had an illusion shown to you. Your mind was eroded by a special sound wave.」

Beside the Triad who were facing each other, there was Coral with his Sword Device unsheathed when they noticed.

He was wearing the military uniform of the Vanheim Principality with his hair braided like usual. His expression was tense.

His appearance was familiar just like before, but one of his eyes looked faintly shining in yellow green color.

「Mind erosion with sound.....? Then, the scene just now—」

「Yes. it was the work of the great demon called Iblis, the Ragnarok that existed in the Garden. It's heading here from the direction of the practice ground. Surely it's planning to crush this Academy in this chance—no, don't tell me.....」

Coral's words halted in the middle and he fell into thought.

「Then, all the students who are affected by this sound wave are dangerous? If

we don't head to intercept the Ragnarok, we will be affected by its illusion again later?」

Coral nodded with a serious gaze at Sharis's question.

「For now plug your ears. If you don't try to get out from here then fatal damage can be prevented. I will call Lux-kun and the others to exterminate the Ragnarok, so you three, please save the Academy's students and staff. Perhaps because a lot of the students are sleeping, there is still no victim, but if the number of people waking up increases from the sounds of battle after this, then friendly fire will be increasing.」

「N, NOOoOOOO-.....! The Abyss, the Abyss is inside the dormitory—!?!」

A shrill scream rose from inside the corridor and a girl wearing pajamas could be seen swinging around her Sword Device.

The Triad immediately put their guard up, but the girl suddenly flopped down in the middle.

「—Good grief. Even though I heard that the Holy Night is a time to be quiet.」

「Wait, Yoruka!?!」

Tillfur raised a surprised voice. A girl in only her underwear appeared from the other side of the corridor.

She was in a state where many of her body parts were bandaged due to injury while one arm and one leg were fixed in place with splint, but she knocked down the girls attacking her with the cane supporting her body.

「It seems that thanks to the Baptism that was applied to my left eye, I am able to resist the illusion. Aa, there is no need to worry about the girl. I only made her faint.」

「.....」

Even though Yoruka herself was seriously injured and couldn't wear a Drag-Ride, she subdued the girl who was rampaging due to the illusion in a flash.

The height of that skill and the precision of her attack caused the Triad to be in admiration once more.

「Then, it will be fine if the four of us make all the students here to sleep correct?」

When Yoruka talked to Coral who was similarly watching in astonishment, the young man nodded after hesitating for a bit.

「Yes—everyone, I'll leave it to you.」

After saying only that, Coral sheathed his sword and ran outside.

At the same time, the leader of the Triad, Sharis gave the order.

「Noct! Call out to the main force of Syvalles with your Drake! As soon as you detect the presence of Lux and the others, we will leave the Ragnarok to them and return to suppress the inside of the Academy! Let's go!」

「Yes. Let's hurry.」

「Roogerr」

「My my, me too isn't it.」

When the three and Yoruka nodded, the mission started at the same time.

Noct wore her Drake in order to convey the fact they obtained from Coral.

She confirmed the situation around the girl's dormitory using radar while calling out to Syvalles's members using Dragon Voice, then quickly there was one reaction.

Part 2

「Ah, AAaAH, AH, DIEEEEEEEEE ABYSSS—! Geuh!?!」

- Pashi-!*, dazzling flash of lightning burst in the courtyard at night. A guard Drag-Knight wearing a Drag-Ride fell silent.

Celis was easily neutralizing several people while frowning from hearing Noct's report through Dragon Voice.

「So it was like that, this sound that feels like it's splitting the head and the illusion are.....」

The guards rampaging from the voice of the Ragnarok Iblis began to strike each other, so Celis wearing Lindwurm suppressed them using the Lance of lightning strike.

Of course Celis was also under the influence of the mind attack, but thanks to her habitual mental training, she somehow maintained her sanity.

『Once you finished there, please head to the practice ground right away. Thinking from the movement of the Drag-Rides—Iblis is there.』

「Understood. I also cannot hold on that long. As soon as everyone is gathered—」

「There is no need for that, Celistia.」

The instant Celis responded to Noct, a presence arrived besides her.

It was Lisha wearing Tiamat, her blonde side tail fluttering in the wind.

In addition, besides her was Krulcifer wearing Fafnir and also Philuffy wearing Typhon on the ground.

A few seconds later, Lux wearing Bahamut and Coral wearing an EX Wyvern also arrived.

Excluding Yoruka who was unable to participate due to her injury from the previous battle, the main force of the Academy was gathered here right now.

「It seems that Airi along with Soffice were taken away by the enemy while we were receiving the Ragnarok's mental pollution. We won't be able to do anything without defeating Iblis first, but like this we won't be able to approach it.」

Lux was on tenterhooks because his little sister was taken away once more, but if he lost his calm here it would be just what the enemy wanted.

Thus he suppressed his emotions and turned his gaze to reality.

「Right. If we approach closer than this, then it's likely even with our ears plugged we won't be able to resist. This Iblis, it will also launch mental pollution through sight too right? We will be obliterated altogether without some kind of countermeasure.」

Krulcifer also agreed with Lux.

Although it was only by a hair's breadth, Syvalles had defeated several Ragnarok until now, but as expected, they wouldn't be able to avoid a bitter fight even with their full strength.

Just facing a single Ragnarok was always accompanied with the risk of total annihilation.

「But, there is no time. If the enemy's mental pollution with its voice is progressing to some degree, it should be heading our way then. No, even if that's not the case, we have to defeat the enemy while it's in the practice ground right now!」

「Yeah, it will be no good if it gets away to Cross Field! A lot of citizens will get mixed up!」

「.....Yes. We have, to stop it here.」

Celis's statement met agreement from Lisha and Philuffy.

But, while they were unable to find an effective method, Coral suddenly took out four knives from somewhere.

「Everyone, take this.」

Coral threw the knives that were put inside holders to Lux and the others. Then following Coral's instruction, they unsheathed the knives.

Then—a blade with its edge shining in seven colors appeared.

「This is—Elixir!？」

The secret medicine of the Ruins that liberated the hidden ability of a human and turned them into Nocturnals.

But, the compensation for that would be a backlash to the body if the power was overused. It was a double-edged sword.

「Why.....do you have this?」

Krulcifer asked with a suspicious face. Coral thought for a bit about how to respond and then answered.

「.....I confiscated them when I captured an underling of Dragon Marauder in the Vanheim Principality. I was holding onto them just in case, but now there is no other choice than to use them. The amount of Elixir in them is few, so your body's color won't change, but if it's just for around ten-odd minutes, you will obtain resistance against mental pollution—supposedly.」

「.....」

Even if for example no change would happen at the surface of their body, they would still be reluctant to use it.

Lux and co. were all hesitating, but hearing the roar of the Ragnarok once more, they resolved themselves.

「.....It doesn't look like there is time to hesitate. If we don't defeat that thing, everything will be over.」

「Yosh, we're going to do this!」

Krulcifer sighed, while Lisha also resolved herself and agreed.

Everyone except Coral stabbed the tip of the knife on their skin. Then the liquid of seven colors permeated inside and intense heat enveloped their bodies.

「Let's go everyone! The target is the Ragnarok in the practice ground, this so

called Iblis! Fight from mid-range at the very least so you won't get done in by the mental pollution! Krulcifer and I will take care of firepower!」

Lisha took a deep breath and took command with a loud voice.

Krulcifer's Fafnir had the sniper rifle Freezing Cannon, while Lisha's Tiamat possessed a main cannon with super firepower, Seven Heads, as a special armament.

Because they would receive more influence of mental pollution the closer they were to the enemy, it was the best to entrust the attacking role to those two.

At the same time when Lisha told that, everyone drove their Drag-Rides and started to move simultaneously—but, the moment they headed to the practice grounds and Iblis's figure came into view, a swarm of Abyss sprang out in front of them.

「.....What-!?!」

Lisha and the others who completely thought that there was only a single Ragnarok were taken aback and came to a stop.

Not letting go of that opening, a single Drag-Ride leaped out from inside the darkness and approached before their eyes.

Clad in the Divine Drag-Ride Asp that possessed four legs and claws, it was Dragon Marauder's division commander Drakkhen Megistri.

「This woman-!?! Where did she appear from!?!」

Lisha's eyes snapped open in surprise while she barely deployed a reinforced barrier and blocked the steel claw attack.

Beside her Krulcifer quickly intercepted using her sniper rifle, but Drakkhen leaped backward and escaped.

When Lisha and the others who lost sight of her figure were perplexed, Drakkhen had instantly moved to far behind the practice ground.

「—No. That's a misunderstanding you know, New Kingdom's Academy raid force, ladies of Syvalles.」

When the members of Syvalles were going to chase after her, a thick male voice came.

「We didn't appear here. We were waiting, for you all to come here.」

Thanks to the torches that were prepared here and there in the practice ground, they could see the figures of three Drag-Knights at the deepest area within the swarm of the Abyss.

「You three, if I'm not mistaken—」

「Sorry for the late introduction, Princess of the New Kingdom. My name is Dragon Marauder's Heaven Dragon division commander, Gatouhan Barres.」

A large man with tanned skin, muscular body build, and masculine impression first introduced himself like that.

「Similarly, Earth Dragon division commander, Vine Hachettes.」

「Similarly, Human Dragon division commander, Drakkhen Megistri. I'm indebted to you guys from that time.」

Furthermore, the young boy who looked conspicuously young among the three, and the woman of blooming age dressed like a bandit also introduced themselves.

The group of Drag-Knights who had repeatedly held skirmishes in regards to the Ruins until now.

These three who were the main force of Dragon Marauder finally appeared altogether.

「Just when I thought that the bunch who were sneaking around until now are finally coming out, they have guards of Ragnarok and the Abyss. As expected huh, don't you even have courage to fight properly?」

Lisha glared at the three and provoked them. Drakkhen responded with a wry smile.

「Royal family members don't know about mercenary work huh. For us, results are what matter. What's more, when it comes to a scramble for the Grand Force that is related to Avalon, fighting in a honest way is foolish right?」

「Besides—you all are strong. The speed of your growth is also not common. I believe that this much supplemental battle force is the minimum requirement to fight you all, you know?」

After the boy called Vine said that indifferently, Celis readied her Lance and gazed at the opponents.

「Praise from outsiders is unnecessary. After defeating you all and the Ragnarok, I will listen to your story from inside the prison.」

「Dealing with us while taking out a Grand Force from inside the Ragnarok while you are at it. Spreading Iblis's mental pollution to the whole Academy so that we cannot escape, forcing us to participate in this battle.....is it correct to consider that as your plan?」

In addition Krulcifer also stated that while overlooking the area from the sky.

「Nice conjecture. Incidentally we are planning to catch you alive. After all, a Key's Supervisor is a tool that might still be necessary.」

Gatouhan grinned fearlessly. Lisha snapped and yelled.

「Enough with the tedious talk, we've got no time here. We aren't going to hold back!」

The tension was slowly rising. At that moment when the opening of hostilities would start, Philuffy who was staying quiet until now muttered quietly.

「Lu-chan, is gone. How?」

「.....-!?」

‘Now that she mentioned it’, thinking that, everyone looked around searchingly.

When they noticed, the figure of Lux and Bahamut who should be acting together with them had vanished completely.

「How mysterious. Perhaps it might be related somehow with how I suddenly appeared at the beginning isn't it?」

Drakkhen's grin that was making fun of them caused everyone to be on their guard, but right after that Coral quietly spoke.

「There is one thing that I want to ask to you three. The one who kidnapped Soffice and Lux-san—your current master, who is it?」

「.....? What do you mean? They came here in order to save Dragon Marauder's employer, Soffice Xfer isn't it?」

Krulcifer was puzzled. In response Coral shook his head slightly.

「No, I also stood watch over Soffice and Re Plica, but they vanished from the prison after Iblis moved. The Moon's function can give instructions to Ragnarok—such feat should be impossible with Dragon Marauder's authority. In other words.....the enemy mastermind who moved that function is somewhere.」

「A mastermind existence who can move a Ruin.....you say?」

Lisha showed a dubious expression, but right after that the Wyvern division commander Gatouhan drew out his Sword Device.

The back wings of the Divine Drag-Ride with poisonous purplish red color were tinged with light and he instantly took a fighting stance.

「—The talk ends here. Become the sacrifice for a brand new kingdom that we will obtain!」

The trigger of the battle was pulled.

A great amount of the Abyss, three division commanders of Dragon Marauder, and then a Ragnarok, Iblis, at the back. The curtains of a deathly battle against that lineup was opened.

Part 3

「This place.....where in the world—!？」

Lux woke up from his interrupted consciousness.

Even though he should be in the Academy's practice ground just a moment before, he wondered just what had happened.

A spherical space that was surrounded with silver colored metallic wall.

The space was as spacious as the Academy's practice ground. There was no one there except Lux with his Bahamut.

But, there was a gigantic mechanical pillar in the middle of the room.

At first Lux thought it was the main pillar of this room, but something was different.

The pillar changed shape with complicated and mysterious gears' movements. It grew limbs and took a stance like a fortress.

「-.....!? Don't tell me, this thing!」

「That's right you damn idiot. Deus Ex Machina—I called it here using the Moon's instructions. It's the Ragnarok that protected the Ymir Theocracy's Hall!」

The mysterious voice echoed inside the space.

When Lux searched for the voice's origin with his gaze, he found a small glass window from viewing at a room above.

「—Airi!?」

Lux glided with Bahamut and looked inside the neighboring room that could be seen through the glass. He unconsciously raised his voice.

Airi in her uniform was unconscious while being tied at the corner of the

room.

Furthermore, beside her there was also Soffice who was in a worn-out state.

Her usual expressionless face that was like a mask had crumbled. She was sweating while looking uneasy.

Someone wearing a robe with hood that was hanging low over her eyes was standing before the two girls. That person abruptly snapped her fingers.

Then the wall of the room where Lux was at was projecting an image with a window frame of light.

The window frame was showing the students running riot inside the girl's dormitory on the night of the Holy Night Festival, and the predicament of Lisha along with the others who were surrounded by a great amount of the Abyss.

「This is, the happening in the Academy!? What is going on!? Why am I—why is Soffice beaten up like that?」

「That is, because she is not needed anymore desu.」

「.....!?」

Inside the room at the other side of the glass, the Automata Re Plica was muttering with eyes that had lost their light.

And then, she grabbed Soffice's neck with both her hands and lifted her up to the air.

「This place is inside the Moon that is floating above the Academy desu. Following ^{watashi} my master's command, it moved for the sake of getting rid of the Arcadia siblings.」

The abundant emotional expressions from Re Plica until now were vanishing.

She only coldly carried out her order and completely changed into a pure machine.

Soffice who guessed that bit her lips in frustration while her usual blank expression crumbled.

「How..... Why did Dragon Marauder betray me!? We should have a contract!」

「That's obviously because you became unnecessary desu, fool.」

「—!？」

Re Plica who was manipulated by someone told that with her mouth splitting open into crescent shape.



「Just like how you didn't seriously believe in them, just how you had no intention to hand over Avalon to them, the three Dragon Marauders also weren't trusting you. If there is another person who can move the Moon, then the rest doesn't matter for them, do you understand desu?」

「Uh, a.....!」

Soffice endured the pain from having her throat constricted and she barely shook off Re Plica's arms.

After she coughed *geho geho*, tears oozed out from the pain.

「You can feel happy desu. Your name will remain in history as the villain who declared war on the world. This New Kingdom will perish.....you can be useful as a pawn of this ^{ore} me in obtaining this world!」

Re Plica's voice was mixed with a strange nuance of a male way of speaking.

It sounded to Lux as though she was speaking as proxy for someone who wasn't here.

「I, won't.....let you. What I wished for, isn't such conclusion—uah!」

「Soffice!?!」

Soffice's face was kicked by the Automata. Lux raised his voice seeing that.

When he drove his Bahamut to help her right away, the gigantic steel pillar suddenly moved and thrust its huge arm that was like a lump of iron.

In contrast with its slow and dull appearance, the fist attack launched with a speed that the eye couldn't follow.

Different from the fifth Ruin Gigas, its size was only a fragment of it, but in exchange its speed was incomparably fast.

The attack that was launched like a battering ram instantly smashed Bahamut's solid barrier.

The moment Lux barely parried it by using his great sword as a shield, the pillar suddenly circled behind Lux and swung down its huge arm like an iron hammer

「Tsu.....!? —Reload on Fire!」

Lux activated his Divine Raiment not on himself, but on the Ragnarok, Deus ex Machina that was attacking him.

The Divine Raiment was deployed in wide range, enveloping the gigantic mechanical body.

It was a battle technique called Violent Strike that compressed the next five seconds, dealing continuous strikes during that compressed time, and then in the remaining five seconds the amassed slashes would be liberated all at once, increasing the destructive power.

Lux swung his great swords and concentrated ten slashes into one point, but the impact was deflected and the enemy didn't even twitch.

「Wha-!?!」

When Lux was taken aback, the counterattacking iron arm punched through the air and mowed him down.

The barrier of Bahamut was easily smashed and Lux crashed onto the far away metallic wall behind.

「Guh.....! What, hardness.....!」

It wasn't that Lux's attack didn't work.

The surface of Deus ex Machina's body had thin lines carved on it like countless scratches.

It showed that the answer was the enemy's hardness was merely in a different dimension.

The hidden technique that boasted the greatest offensive power even among all his skills—Recoil Burst, surely damage wouldn't be inflicted without using it.

(Everyone isn't here. I have no choice but to do it alone.....!)

All the Ragnarok he had faced until now were all similarly mighty without equal, but at those times his reliable Syvalles comrades shaved the enemy's strength for him.

But this time he had no such support.

Could he win against this unprecedented monster alone, by himself?

「Ku-ku-ku..... So you still have some leeway there. Is it okay that you are resting your attack like that?」

「What.....?」

Lux took distance while forming a strategy, but the mocking laugh of Re Plica who was speaking as a proxy for someone else came from above.

「If you hesitate and stop attacking, Deus ex Machina will assist with the battle below y'know?」

「—!?!」

The countless light frames floating on the surrounding walls—inside the images that were showing the sight of the ground below, he could see the figures of Lisha and the others under attack.

It seemed, Deus ex Machina was using its instant teleportation ability to back up the battle of Dragon Marauder.

Even though there was also Iblis below there, the battle would be unmanageable if one other Ragnarok was helping out.

He had no time to run away.

He could only continue attacking in order to not let the Ragnarok before him assist with the battle below.

「—That's right. Come.」

Lux let out a heated sigh and glided towards the Ragnarok.

He put his strength into the fingertips holding the control stick and threw his body into a reckless fight for the sake of diverting the enemy's attention.

Part 4

「Shit, what is going on from some time ago!? The enemies' positions are changing constantly!？」

Below the Moon where Lux was fighting inside.

A deathly battle against Dragon Marauder was continuing in the Academy's practice ground.

Perhaps it was difficult for Iblis to activate its ability to only specific targets, because it wasn't really attacking with its mental pollution.

But, its attack using its six arms that was unleashed when it was approached was sharp and heavy.

In addition the scorching heat breath attack it blew out couldn't be blocked with Drag-Ride's barrier, so it was extremely dangerous.

Thus, Celis who possessed outstanding skill even among these members would close in and serve as the Ragnarok's opponent mainly by using her Lance's lightning attack from mid-range.

「This is a terrible miscalculation—no, we were careless. The enemies are also deeply knowledgeable about us.」

In order to decrease the effect of mental pollution, Lisha and Krulcifer sniped at Iblis from long range.

—But, the swarm of Abyss that crowded the practice ground became a shield and they couldn't aim. Because both Lisha and Krulcifer were constantly targeted by multiple Abyss, it was next to impossible to support Celis who was unfolding a high speed midair battle.

On the ground, Vine and Philuffy, the fellow users of land battle type Divine Drag-Rides were fighting.

It seemed that Philuffy was a cut above Vine in skill, but the Abyss on the ground were mostly focusing on Philuffy alone, because of that she was currently being pushed back.

「Strange. Something is odd. The Abyss here are too powerful, there are even some that I have never seen before—uah!？」

Coral was also undertaking the role of facing the Abyss using his EX Wyvern, but he was gradually receiving attacks from all directions.

The Abyss in the air were of familiar types like Gargoyle, Chimera, Diablos, and so on, but their appearances were different from before.

For some reason there was also a Gargoyle that was transparent like a Phantom. In this situation where there was no Drag-Knight using Drake type that had radar, they would fall behind in dealing with such enemies no matter what.

「It's strange as expected! Strange Abyss that I've never seen before until now are among them mixing in!」

Lisha was also using Legion and hit back the Abyss, but while she was defeating her opponent, she was bewildered when she discovered things like slime floating in the air.

Due to the appearance of things like chaff slime that would restrict a Drag-Ride's movement, the strength of her special armament was damped.

「Calling them strange—that's a bit rude. Fusing them like that was really hard you know?」

「.....What-!？」

Lisha showed an opening from feeling shocked. At that instant, Gatouhan's Divine Drag-Ride closed in and slashed.

「Watch out-!」

Coral immediately cut in and blocked it, but that Blade vanished.

「.....What!？」

「—Hmph」

Gatouhan didn't overlook the opening of the shaken Coral and swung down his Blade.

Lisha who saw that immediately threw her Dagger and dealt an impact from the side, diverting the slash's trajectory.

But, right when the dagger hit Gatouhan's armor, the Dagger was absorbed into the armor as though it was melting.

「-.....!? What the hell with this guy's Drag-Ride!? It's taking in the very weapons of Coral and I.....!？」

「So you noticed. Well, it's a trick that will get exposed sooner or later anyway.」

「So that's, the power of the Divine Drag-Ride you're wearing.....!」

Coral who took distance pointed that out. Gatouhan responded with a bold smile.

「My Divine Drag-Ride's name is Hydra. Its Divine Raiment's name is ^{Sacred Eclipse T} ReAlive, the power to 『fuse』 fellow things that are in contact with this armor and weapons.」

「Fuse—then, these unfamiliar Abyss too, don't tell me!？」

They weren't just new types that were refined with the Ruin's power, but combined creatures that were made by Gatouhan's Hydra in large quantity.

「It's impossible to fuse living things and inorganic matter though, but it can take away your weapon and break them down—haah!」

Hydra brandished its Blade right overhead, and then unleashed a sword flash along with a breath.

At that moment, fragments of broken Blade and Dagger were fired at the same time. The buckshot of metal fragments made Lisha and Coral to falter.

The weapons that were fused and absorbed just now were shot out as metal fragments.

「U, guh.....Legion-!？」

Unable to endure, Lisha intercepted with Tiamat's special armament—the

projectile weapon Legion.

「Hahahaha! Do you feel like giving me strength?」

- Pakii!* The weapon was taken in by Hydra's Divine Raiment as soon as it came into contact.

But at that moment, Gatouhan was struck down instantly from midair to the ground of the practice ground.

「Nuuh!?!」

Purple gravity field—Tiamat's Divine Raiment Suppressor.

「Just now was only bait you idiot! The sin of stealing two of my important weapons.....I'll make you pay for them in full! Seven Heads!」

Lisha aimed at Gatouhan right below and fired the thick beam of her main cannon.

The torrent of dazzling energy was going to swallow Gatouhan along with Hydra, it was then his figure vanished instantly from the ground.

「Chih—don't tell me!?!」

「Behind you! Be careful!」

Krulcifer yelled, at the same time she sniped using her Freezing Cannon towards Gatouhan who was teleported behind Lisha.

The freezing bullet splendidly hit Gatouhan's Hydra using the future prediction that was Fafnir's Divine Raiment, but the frozen part was immediately fused and changed into ice that covered the armor's skin.

「.....So even coagulation of water fluid is treated as inorganic matter. That's troublesome.」

「Hahaha, it's you girls who cannot be underestimated. It would be dangerous without our employer's backup there.」

Gatouhan took a distance for the moment. Then his figure suddenly vanished at the same time with his bold smile.

「.....-!?!」

Right after Lisha lost sight of Gatouhan's figure, Hydra with its Blade readied was falling from above as though it was stabbing its fang.

「Ku.....! It's strange since just now! Strange teleportation is happening in timing that is disadvantageous for us. Someone is teleporting these guys!」

「Instant teleportation.....Deus ex Machina! The other Ragnarok is helping them from the Moon above! Most likely, Lux-kun and Soffice are also there—uah!?!」

Phantom—the invisible Abyss attacked Coral midair and staggered him.

For a moment, Lisha thought it strange that Coral could guess the situation right away, but she had no leeway to think deeper about it.

Right at the beginning the battle situation looked even, but the advantage was gradually leaning towards the enemy.

「—Haah!」

- BASHlllll!*, Lindwurm that Celis piloted thrust her Lance with the momentum of her flight behind it.

The great demon with huge six arms—the Ragnarok Iblis could only be held back by the Academy's strongest, Celis right now.

If she looked at Iblis's eye, she would receive mental pollution from its flickering eye glint, so she could only measure its movement from the motion of its limbs and wings—or from the wind pressure after it moved.

The opponent was a monster that was too much to be faced alone even when fighting normally. Against such enemy, Celis raised her fervor and displayed a battle where she didn't take even a step back, but even that was rapidly approaching the limit.

Each time Celis received the bizarre sound wave that Iblis would emit sometimes, her brain would be stirred up, threatening the heart of Celis who had amassed tenacious disciplining.

—Terror, anxiety, hatred, rage, grief.

The mental disturbance that was induced by the sound wave caused the

listener to imagine various negative emotions and gave birth to disorders in the mind.

The strengthened resistance from Elixir was also in the process of running out.

There weren't many chances remaining for her.

She had no choice but staking all her strength in the remaining offense and defense that she could only execute several more times and bring down the enemy.

『Lizsharte, is it possible for you to back me up?』

『I can anytime! Right now Krulcifer is facing the big man. The airheaded girl is facing the boy while Coral is taking on the female bandit.』

Of course, they were doing so while also defeating the Abyss that were being manipulated by horn flute sound that was played by the Divine Raiment of Drakkhen's Asp, but they were finally reducing the number of the Abyss until dozens of them were left.

They perseveringly whittled the hindrances one by one while holding back the three Dragon Marauders.

In order to crush the Ragnarok Iblis, they preserved the stamina of Lisha who possessed the greatest firepower in long range while the other members shouldered the burden.

「What a terrifying bunch, to persevere in a situation that is this disadvantageous. Vine! Can you back me up here?」

「It's impossible. Unfortunately, even the petrification of my Basilisk is defeated by Typhon's Divine Raiment. It doesn't look like I'll be able to hold out that long.」

Vine who wielded a Blade to fight was avoiding lethal damage also due to the reinforcement from the Abyss, but due to the irregular attacks from Philuffy that was weaving fists and kicks together, his armor was starting to be broken in some places.

「If you're going to surrender then do it quickly. We've no leeway, to go easy after all.」

In order to use Typhon's Divine Raiment, Philuffy activated her Abyssification and amassed fatigue. She closed the distance with Vine and declared so.

Each fight was approaching the conclusion. It gave the premonition that the end of this battle was near.

Celis who saw her comrades' exhaustion resolved herself to settle the battle here.

Divine Gate would be effective in offense and defense, but here she suppressed her strength and didn't use it as much as possible.

「The enemies' instant teleportation isn't happening since some time ago. Surely Lux is holding back the Ragnarok that is in the Moon. Then—!」

Celis faced the great demon Ragnarok Iblis and closed in.

The Ragnarok spewed out hell fire and consecutive attacks from its six arms. Celis fired her own armor like a buckshot in a counter.

「Break Purge!」

The technique functioned as a smoke screen as well as creating an opening. It threw away one's own defense and transformed the Drag-Ride into a shape that was specialized for offense.

The thrust of Lightning Lance that was unleashed from the minimum frame motion was sucked deeply into Iblis's chest.

「—U, UaaaaAASU!」

Iblis that only emitted sounds of roar until now raised a pained scream for the first time.

Using that opening, Krulcifer who shook off the pursuit of the Abyss sniped the mouth of the demon that was opened and froze it for the sake of their counterattack.

「Now! Philuffy!」

「.....Got it.」

Philuffy's Typhon kicked away Vine's Basilisk. At the same time Pile Anchors fired from every part of her armor, entangling Iblis with wires and restraining it.

In addition she skated on the practice ground's ground and swung around Iblis who had its chest stabbed.

Even if Deus ex Machina that was inside the Moon above tried to use teleportation, it would be obstructed in advance by constantly moving the enemy. That was the aim.

If the target was moved irregularly, the enemy would also become unable to narrow down the coordinate for teleportation.

The plan was for Lisha to fire the finisher in that timing with certainty.

「—UU.....UaaAaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAASSU!」

It seemed Iblis intended to resist. A shriek of terrifying mental pollution thundered while Iblis was starting to struggle.

「Ku.....! Airheaded girl! Don't you dare let go of the enemy!」

Lisha endured that pain while calling out to Philuffy.

So that Dragon Marauder wouldn't be a hindrance, Krulcifer activated the Divine Raiment of future prediction, Wise Blood, while pinning them in place with her sniping.

And then,

「—Ei」

With a bland voice, Philuffy reeled in Iblis close and kicked it up to the sky with Typhon's armored leg.

The wire binding was disconnected and Iblis floated in the air with its back facing the night sky. Right after that, Tiamat's main cannon fired.

「This is the end Ragnarok! Seven Heads!」

An extremely thick pillar of light.

The flash of impact and high heat punched through the atmosphere and attacked with wave motion.

The defending six arms, the chest, and in addition the lower jaw with fangs growing from there were smashed altogether. The core inside its body, the Grand Force was exposed.

「Va, Aa.....」

Iblis raised a pained scream with its chest and lower jaw blown away.

Its remaining huge body was turning to ash from receiving the after shock of the cannon shot's might.

With this everyone in the Academy would stop getting affected by mental pollution for the time being.

It was great they could defeat the enemy's main battle strength in this timing where the effects of Elixir had run out.

Of course there was still one Ragnarok remaining so they still couldn't let their guard down, but they were released from the extreme nervousness and a slight relaxedness was born.

Even so they didn't avert their gaze from the remaining members of Dragon Marauder and kept up their guard, but—

「It's only you three remaining you know? This will be the last time I permit you all to surrender.」

「That's really awesome. Defeating that Iblis without the Black Hero here—」

In respond to Celis's gaze and announcement, Drakkhen clapped and sent them words of praise.

Her armor had been damaged, but despite that she was showing a composed smile for some reason.

「Even though you girls have that much strength, but you all are naïve. We mercenaries aren't like that. We won't have mercy even if it's an opponent who is on the verge of defeat.」

「Can I take it to mean that any consideration is unnecessary for all of you?」

Celis pressured once more. Drakkhen smiled wryly to that.

「Yeah, that ain't necessary. We are the victors after all.」

「—What?」

Lisha who was far in the back frowned hearing that. At that instant, the voice of Philuffy who was standing on the ground could be heard.

「—Be careful! There is a strange smell from the surroundings!」

Philuffy raised an urgent voice that was unusual for her who usually was following her own pace.

Right after that, the figures of Dragon Marauder who were gasping tiredly from the battle until now vanished one after another.

First Gatouhan and Vine vanished, leaving Drakkhen alone at the end.

「Teleportation!? You are planning to escape to the Moon?」

「Wait! The situation is strange! Certainly there are presences from the surrounding.」

Krulcifer said that and activated the Divine Raiment of future prediction.

At that moment, she was speechless from the sight of a few seconds in the future that was reflected in her eyes.

「For what reason we chose this spacious practice ground as the battlefield instead of near the Academy where we can get the students involved. Can you understand why? The power will decrease if there are obstacles, and in the first place they cannot be led there well with how slow they are. The oil type slime Abyss that can explode, that are fused with Phantoms so that they can become transparent, I mean.」

Right after Drakkhen told that with a wicked smile, intense sparks leaked out from the dying Iblis.

「I'll also say this, Iblis was purposefully weakened a bit so it could be killed instead. It's so that it can ignite the fire for us you see. Well then, everyone of the New Kingdom. Adieu.」

Right after she finished saying that, Drakkhen's figure vanished from there.

The teleportation by the other Ragnarok that was remaining in the Moon.

Lisha yelled when she understood the meaning of the three's disappearance.

「Everyone! Run away from here! Go to the Academy right—」

- Bachii-!*

Iblis that was floating in the air spewed out fire from its insides, blowing out fire from its bursting and scattering.

Right after that, the great amount of Oil Slime that were crawling between the audience seats so they wouldn't get noticed caught fire. The practice ground was swallowed by intense light and hell fire.

Part 5

「N, nn.....」

The tied Airi woke up due to the explosion sound from the ground below that reached even until the Moon.

Within her dazed consciousness, the silver colored metallic wall came into her view.

On a part of that wall surface, countless rectangle windows of light were floating.

There, the scene below the moon—the practice ground that Airi was familiar with was projected. It was currently being blown away with a destructive blast.

「-.....!? Everyone!? What is—」

When she raised a voice of incomprehension, she noticed the presences inside the room.

Airi held her breath in surprise. There the three division commanders of Dragon Marauder wearing their Divine Drag-Rides were standing.

「Haa, haa..... I'm tired, really.」

「We are also nearly at our limit..... Those girls, as expected they cannot be faced with normal means.」

「Right. But, with this, the preparations are finally in place.」

A part of their armor was broken, but their flesh body was mostly unharmed.

Furthermore, beside them there were the figures of Re Plica whose eyes were blank and Soffice who was prostrating on the floor.

「I, before this, was kidnapped in the Academy..... —Soffice-san, please hang in there!」

Airi who fainted just a little while ago was unable to grasp the situation accurately.

But from this tense atmosphere, the control of Re Plica as an Automata was stolen by someone.

And then the Dragon Marauder bared their fangs towards their employer Soffice. Those were the only things she could imagine.

「.....Why, did you betray me?」

Soffice slowly stood up and asked with a murmur while keeping her head down. Drakkhen turned an exasperated gaze towards her in response.

「.....Mercenary business isn't philanthropic work. The most important thing is to stick on the side that looks like the winning side. We are different from a servant that is serving a noble. There ain't any meaning in being dutiful. You cannot comprehend the common sense for this kind of thing huh.」

「At the very least, I should have given you all your reward as stipulated by the contract. You betrayed me even then?」

Shadow covered her eyes, even so Soffice formed her words imploringly.

It was the last remaining thread of hope for her.

As though to desperately reel in the chance for turning the tables no matter how thin and unreliable the thread was.

But,

「Unfortunately, we have gone back to our past employer. Besides, you had opened the door to the deepest parts of the Garden already right? You were left alive because your authority as a Key's Supervisor was useful but, our business with you is mostly finished now.」

「.....」

Soffice lost her words at the blunt rejection of Vine.

The control of Re Plica who was like her little sister was stolen, and she was also betrayed by the mercenaries who she hired through negotiations—all her hopes were completely severed.

「Sorry, Uruk. I'm unable, to accomplish the mission.....」

Soffice spoke her repentance towards her dead little sister.

—What awaited trust was betrayal and murder.

That was why she tried to fight alone until now, and yet she couldn't do even that.

She also wasn't able to grant the wishes of Uruk who said that she wanted a friend, and she wasn't even able to accomplish her mission as a Key's Supervisor.

Besides, what was the most painful above all else was how Re Plica got taken away.

Even though till the very end, only she should be the one—who would stay as her ally until her death.

「It's pitiful but, this is also what they call fate. If you are going to hold a grudge, then resent yourself for lacking the caliber to obtain comrades who are worthy of trust.」

After Drakkhen, who calmed her breathing, said that over her shoulder, besides her Vine looked down on the spherical shape at the side from the small window in the room.

Inside the battle space that was for use of virtual battle, Lux and Deus ex Machina were unfolding an intense battle.

「Even so, that Lux Arcadia is a really terrifying man. He is able to contend with that Ragnarok until this far with just that Bahamut.」

Lux was breathing hard with his front hair trickling sweat.

He had cut wounds from the fragments of the enemy's body that he smashed, but other than that his armor was mostly unharmed. But he couldn't hide the color of exhaustion in his face.

If his movement stopped for even a moment, Lux himself would be teleported by the enemy's ability, so he continued to move without resting. This was the result.

And then above all else, Lux had no deciding move.

He was lacking firepower to destroy the Ragnarok which possessed hardness that was several times more than Myhtrildite.

When he struck a hundred consecutive slashes with End Action, the countless overlapping shell of Deus ex Machina dispersed the impact.

「With that huge mechanical god as an opponent, an attack without concentrated power behind it won't work properly.」

Gatouhan added an explanation after the calm impression of Drakkhen.

Having said that, if Lux launched an attack with extraordinary power like Recoil Burst, such attack that was using large swings and moved in a straight line would be completely dodged with teleportation.

Thus, his stamina was reduced without being able to deal decisive damage.

「.....-!?」

Lux was fighting a Ragnarok by himself inside a battle space that could be looked down from this room.

Airi who heard that desperately struggled with her body that was tied by rope.

Luckily or unluckily, the restrains weren't that strong, perhaps because they thought she wouldn't be able to escape from here anyway.

She took out the knife that she was covertly carrying within her pocket and secretly began to cut the rope.

There was almost nothing that she could do right now.

Even so, there was no way she could just stay quiet watching the predicament of her big brother and everyone else.

「Enough with the pointless talk you mongrels. The explosion below has settled down. Recover Iblis's Grand Force and finish off those trashes there.」

「Yeah, with this, our association with those bunches will be over.」

Right after Drakkhen replied to Re Plica's words, the three division commanders were enveloped by light. A teleportation by Deus ex Machina

occurred.

After the three vanished, the controlled Re Plica slowly walked towards Soffice with a knife in hand.

「I've no more business with you. Now you're only a disposable key—so I'll cut the tendons of your limbs.」

「.....」

The looking down Soffice didn't even twitch, let alone resist.

The Automata brandished the knife emotionlessly and then swung it down towards the girl.

「——」

Fresh blood danced in the air along with the sound of torn flesh.

But, Soffice was embraced along with an impact that suddenly came from the side and she was pushed down on the floor.

「—Airi! What, are you doing?」

Soffice's emotionless eyes that were blank as though she had died already opened wide, and light returned to them.

Seeing that, Airi endured the pain from her slashed back and smiled stout-heartedly.

「That's my line. Why aren't you resisting? Why aren't you running away? Are you going to be done in silently without fighting?」

「.....It, doesn't matter, anymore. It's impossible for me. I cannot, do anything.....」

「Are you going to give up just because you got betrayed twice? Even though you tried to save the world by going as far as making the world your enemy. Aren't you succeeding the dying wish of your little sister!?!」

「.....」

「Stop with the pointless struggle. The entrance of this room is already locked. There is no escape.」

Re Plica seemed to use her function as Gear Leader to lock the room and declared so while approaching.

Airi stood up, pulled on Soffice's arm, and desperately hit on the door.

「You can be desperate because your comrades are still alive. I have nothing anymore. Whether it's Uruk, or Dragon Marauder that I hired—」

「That's wrong.」

Airi took a stance with the knife she brought and faced Re Plica who was closing the distance bit by bit.

Airi who was a civil official cadet didn't even learn basic self-defense satisfactorily, even so she stood to protect the unarmed Soffice.

「My big brother, it was a short time that wasn't even a week but, I believe that you also understood. He was always getting dragged into ^{unnecessary incident} trouble, just a softhearted and simple fool. He is really a hopeless brother. But, even such big brother who is beyond help, has a really good side to him. Just one, something that even I recognized.」

「.....That's—」

「Once he decided on something, he will surely carry it out no matter what.」

Saying that, Airi brought her face closer to the window inside the small room.

She exchange glances with Lux who looked up her way for an instant, and she twirled her finger quietly.

It was as though she gave some kind of signal to Lux.

「Around Nii-san in the past, there wasn't anybody who would become our ally. Even so, Nii-san fought no matter how many years. In order to make a country that we can like and stay at, in order to find comrades, he didn't give up. That's why I'll also fight. After all I am—Nii-san's little sister.」

「——」

Soffice lost her words hearing the words of Airi who resolved herself.

「I won't let Re Plica-san kill you. Because, I don't want to let your friend, be forced to do something like that.」

「My, friend.....?」

Hearing that, Soffice stared at the Automata before her.

The figure that completely lost her heart and got controlled by someone.

The memory of family who had stayed with her until now longer than anyone.

「I.....」

Beside the wavering Soffice, Airi told Re Plica who had come before her—more accurately, to the someone who gave her orders and talked through her.

「.....You, should be unable to kill me. You brought me here to use me as a hostage towards Nii-san at the critical moment right? Then, you won't be able to lay your hands on her with me covering her like this.」

「Hah.....hahahahaha!」

Re Plica's mouth twisted into an arc and she laughed loudly.

「You talk like you know who is manipulating this doll huh, former princess-sama?」

「I know who you are. Even I haven't kept observing people for so many years just for show. Because I was treated like a nuisance in the Old Empire and given a criminal status in the New Kingdom, I need to carefully watch everyone's expression in order to live until now. I have become skilled only in that kind of unpleasant aspect.」

「.....I see. But you know, you miscalculated. I've got no more need for hostages or anything for your big brother! It's over for that guy already! No matter what kind of technique he uses, something like a method to win against that Ragnarok—」

- Pakii-!*

Right after Re Plica boasted of her victory, the window beside her was pierced through.

「—!?」

What was thrown into the room through there was a Sword Device sheathed inside a white scabbard.

While fighting Deus ex Machina, Lux looked for a chance and threw it.

Airi broke into a run and picked that up.

She slightly pulled out the sword from the sheath before returning it right away.

「Just when I thought what you are going to do, are you planning to fight with a general purpose Drag-Ride at this late? Just try it. It's pointless though.」

「U, kuh.....!?!」

But, Re Plica ran towards Airi and grabbed her neck. She hung her up midair.

Airi dropped the sheath and it slid on the small room's floor. It stopped near Soffice's foot.

「As I thought, it's.....impossible.」

The hopeless situation didn't change.

No matter how hard Lux tried, no matter how much courage Airi summoned, in the end it became like this.

Lux had that kind of fate, which Soffice didn't have.

And then, even that possibility would soon come to an end.

But— seeing the Automata who was constricting Airi's neck with an expression that was warped in delight, a twinge of pain was created inside Soffice.

『These people are surely, not bad people desu.』

『The people of Syvalles, all of them are good natured people.』

『You lie desu! Even though the truth is—you want comrades more than anyone! You are only running away because you are scared to get hurt desu!』

「—!?!」

The pain in her chest that she should have forgotten flared up hotly.

She was unable to protect her betrayed little sister.

However, Uruk, she put her life on the line and resisted.

In order to not let bad people use the power of Avalon to rule over people and hurt them.

『That's why I'll also fight. After all I am, Nii-san's little sister.』

「I—」

As though being pushed on her back, Soffice pulled out the Sword Device from the white sheath.

Soffice would be unable to summon Lux's Wyvern, even so she would be able to fight with the sword. When she made that determination, she noticed.

「This is!? This Sword Device—」

「.....U, a!?」

Re Plica lifted up Airi with one hand. Her other hand was holding a knife.

「I can show him his little sister's corpse. That guy's suffering will be a sight to see for sure. Hahahahaha!」

Re Plica pressed Airi on the window intentionally so that Lux who was fighting in another room could see.

Right after that, the blade the Automata lifted up was swung down towards Airi's chest.

Part 6

「U, ku..... Everyone, how are-, you.....?」

Under the seventh Ruin, Moon—the Academy's practice ground.

The simultaneous explosions of Oil Slimes that approached stealthily due to Drakkhen's tactic caused the practice ground and even the audience seats to become tattered.

Lisha who woke up confirmed that her limbs were still attached. She looked around at the surroundings where the flame blast had settled down.

It seemed because Lisha was the farthest from the explosion, her injuries were relatively light.

Three girls were lying down at the audience seats that had already crumbled without leaving any trace of their original shape.

She could see Celis, Philuffy, and then Coral through the smoke.

With Coral, blood was flowing from his whole body. His four limbs also broke and his breath was faint.

「.....Can you, tell Lux-kun for me? Tell him I'm sorry, that I can not meet him anymore with this appearance.」

Coral muttered with a faltering voice. When his gaze met Lisha, Coral's reached out hand fell powerlessly.

Then light vanished from his eyes and he stopped moving altogether.

「Damn, it.....—!？」

Lisha cursed at her comrade's death, at the same time she felt a strange sense of discomfort.

If it was Philuffy and Celis, then it felt like they would be able to avoid lethal wounds even in that situation, but—

「.....Both of them, had too much burden piled up. Both of them are the type to pretend to be okay no matter their actual condition after all.」

「Krulcifer, are you safe!?!」

A voice that was oozing exhaustion came from the other side of a huge mound of rubble.

After Lisha collapsed the rubble with Tiamat's gravity control, she became speechless seeing the figure of Krulcifer who was standing there.

Fafnir's armor was already dispelled. Blood was flowing from her forehead and limbs.

「Celis-senpai held back the Ragnarok.....Iblis by herself, so she received its powerful mental pollution the most than anyone here, her defense was also weak because she purged a part of her armor. That was why at the moment of that explosion, she was unable to use her Divine Raiment of instant teleportation right away.」

- Cough-*, Krulcifer vomited blood from the backlash of forcing herself to talk.

It seemed rubble fragments tore her pilot suit and hit her body. Her internal organ was injured.

The defense membrane of the barrier should be transmitted to the pilot suit too, but the explosion's impact surpassed even that defensive power.

「Philuffy too, something similar also happened to her. She resisted both the sound of horn flute Drakkhen manipulated and Iblis's mental pollution while fighting Vine and the Abyss without losing against them. She endured and forced herself too much—, uu.....」

「Stop! Don't talk anymore!」

Lisha yelled in panic seeing Krulcifer vomiting out blood again.

But, Krulcifer shook her head slightly in rejection with her face losing color.

「No, there is still something that you have to hear. We are at our limit already. And then those Dragon Marauders should be tired too, but they still

have spare strength left. If we don't decide what to do from here—we will be annihilated.」

Seeing Krulcifer telling her that with feeble breath, Lisha noticed something.

She who should be in long range just like her was totally ruined like this. It was strange.

Fafnir's Divine Raiment could do future prediction, and its special armament Auto Shield should be able to protect her automatically. And yet why did she receive this much injury?

Considering how Tiamat's armor was unexpectedly undamaged, she reached a conclusion that she didn't dare to believe.

「You, did you protect me!? Why!? Why did you do such thing—」

「Actually, I also didn't have any leeway to save you though..... In my future prediction, I saw that you will be unlucky and got directly hit with rubbles, receiving a lethal wound from that—cough-.....!」

Right after Krulcifer showed a cool smile to bluff, she collapsed on the spot.

When Lisha caught her with Tiamat's armored arm, strength left Krulcifer's body.

「You idiot! Did you need to do that until you almost died yourself!? There isn't any reason for you to protect me!」

「.....That might, be so. But, I don't feel bad doing it. Surely the person who I loved, also won't want to see you die.....that was the hunch I got.」

With that Krulcifer closed her eyes and lost consciousness.

Krulcifer who saw the future prediction stood in front of Lisha and poured all her strength into defense so that she wouldn't be fatally injured.

「Even though you usually always made fun of me, damn Krulcifer.....」

It was also like this when they fought Celis together in the Academy.

She was her classmate with whom she always quarreled with in regards to Lux, and sometimes she would speak to her frankly without consideration, but she would lend her strength when it was crucial.

「But, I won't let your decision end as a mistake.」

In the situation just now where the defeat of Celis and Philuffy became certain, it would be hard for Krulcifer whose main method of battle was long range sniping to take on the three Dragon Marauders by herself.

Then, Lisha could only produce results to respond to Krulcifer's act of using all her strength to protect her.

Even so, Lisha only had one dissatisfaction.

「There is no need to decide what to do from here. Defeat those guys, also please take care of Lux.....it would be fine if you just said that to me. After everything that they did to you guys—I'm not someone who will just stay quiet and unable to do anything about it.」

「Heee, I want to see you try that.」

「—!？」

When Lisha turned around towards the voice that suddenly came from behind, three Drag-Knights were standing at the destroyed practice ground before she knew it.

The core of Dragon Marauder, the three division commanders, Gatouhan, Vine and Drakkhen.

It was only for a few minutes but they seemed to have taken a rest. They were gazing at Lisha with leisurely eyes that were convinced of victory.

「Lux Arcadia who is fighting the other Ragnarok in the Moon—Deus ex Machina is already defeated. If you surrender right away then I'll at least spare your life. I return your words before this right back at you.」

「.....」

The boy called Vine calmly said that. In response Lisha filled her gaze with rebellious spirit and glared fiercely.

Drakkhen seemed to feel her intention and shrugged her shoulders in exasperation.

「You all had fought that hard in such a disadvantageous situation. It's not like

I don't understand your feelings, but the action that a princess should take is to give priority to the safety of your comrades right?」

Lisha thought towards that question.

Although she still had spare strength remaining, the battle situation was overwhelmingly disadvantageous.

She mustn't make a mistake with her choice here.

When she thought like that, she noticed a certain fact that she couldn't see until now.

At the same time, there was also a Dragon Voice from the Academy that reached her just now.

「—You are wrong there, lowly bandits.」

「What?」

Gatouhan who acted as the leader among the three glared at Lisha with questioning eyes.

「If I'm thinking of my comrade's life as the priority, then that is even more reason why I must not surrender to people like you. In the battle just now, although you guys are also strengthened by the Baptism whatever, you guys also didn't get away unscathed.」

Even without looking closer, she could see that the three Divine Drag-Rides the Dragon Marauders were wearing were quite damaged.

There wasn't any heavy damage, but at the very least they weren't so unharmed that they could use their full power.

「Besides, you guys don't understand me. If you want to threaten me to surrender, it will be useless unless you bring Lux himself here. There is no way that guy will lose that easily. In other words—it's the opposite. You guys are trying to take us hostage because you want to do something somehow about Lux.」

「.....Hee, I thought that the Princess of the New Kingdom had a personality that was like a wild boar, but looks like you can use your brain a little. But, is it okay? Those girls cannot be left alone without treatment like that for long, or

perhaps—you think you can win against us three by yourself?」

「Us three also have no leeway. It's three against one but, we will finish you off without holding back.」

After Drakkhen, Basilisk that Vine was wearing took a stance with its medium-sized Blade.

At that moment, three Drag-Ride silhouettes could be seen heading this way from behind Lisha.

「Enemy reinforcements huh!」

Gatouhan pointed out while clicking his tongue, but Drakkhen snorted.

「—No, they are just small fries. They aren't Divine Drag-Ride users.」

The people who rushed here as reinforcements were the Triad who suppressed the students as well as the guard Drag-Knights' infighting due to the mental pollution.

But, after accomplishing that, the girls were exhausted and they were also nearly at their limits.

Thus, Sharis and the others weren't wearing the strengthened type Drag-Rides, but the general purpose Drag-Rides.

「Princess! Is everyone safe!? What about the Ragnarok—and Lux-kun!?!」

「Lux is in the middle of fighting the other Ragnarok inside the Moon above. The Ragnarok on the surface here is already defeated. You guys take Krulcifer and the others and return to the Academy! Treating them is the priority!」

「Ueh, how did these three get done in—!? Rather, the Dragon Marauders are still here ain't it!」

「Yes. Three versus one will be impossible. We will also join—」

「Noct! Did you bring what I asked you!?!」

「Is it this sword belt? Certainly it was inside Lisha-sama's room but.....」

That custom made sword belt had three Sword Devices fastened together on it.

Two swords on the waist, and one on the back.

But, every one of those Sword Devices was for a general purpose Drag-Ride.

They couldn't be used together, and they could only exhibit an output that was far away from the Divine Drag-Ride Tiamat.

It was completely unthinkable that it was a trump card that could break through this situation. But,

「Leave the rest to me. I'll show the results of me immersing myself in Drag-Ride research until now.」

Lisha quickly equipped the sword belt while calmly glaring at the Dragon Marauders.

The Dragon Marauders were on guard that the Triad would join in, but they were gradually closing the distance towards the side of rubble where Iblis's Grand Force was buried.

「Listen well. Protect those three no matter what! This is the royal command of the Princess! Get it!?!」

「—Got it. We will save them no matter what, Princess.」

Sharis nodded in response to Lisha's tone that was filled with determination.

The Triad moved simultaneously in order to rescue the three who collapsed on the rubble.

「Hah! You think we will let you?」

Drakkhen yelled, at the same time the other two Dragon Marauders also moved.

Drakkehn leaped with her Asp towards Noct who was going to rescue Krulcifer. She brandished the steel claw on her armored arm from above.

But, at that instant, Lisha's Legion flew in an arc and aimed towards Asp's flank.

「Chih.....!」

While Drakkhen deflected the Legion, Noct's Drake held Krulcifer in its arms.

Without pause she erased her figure with camouflage function and escaped at full speed.

On the other hand, Vine brandished his medium sized Blade and aimed at Philuffy. But his armored leg sunk into the ground.

「So this is Tiamat's Divine Raiment—gravity control. With this I also cannot use my Divine Raiment huh.」

The Divine Raiment of Basilisk that was worn by the Earth Dragon division commander, Vine, was Curse Fader that would paralyze the materials it touched.

But, it couldn't block the gravity force field.

Tillfur's Wyrms picked up Philuffy at that opening before she accelerated the wheels of her armored legs at full speed, skating away.

「—I see, so you properly picked the right method for the right opponent huh? Looks like you've got some brains there huh?」

Lisha didn't send Legion towards Gatouhan so that her weapon wouldn't be absorbed by Hydra's fusion ability.

「However, how are you planning to block my action?」

Conversely speaking, Lisha didn't have any weapon that was suited towards Hydra.

Gatouhan who saw through that assaulted towards the collapsed Celis with a large sized Blade in hand.

But, at that time, an unexpected situation occurred.

Lisha who should be holding back the other two at afar instantly stood in front of Celis—right before Gatouhan's way.

「.....-!? What!?!」

「Eat this—Howling Roar-!」

Gatouhan's eyes snapped open in agitation. Lisha released a Howling Roar with all her strength towards him.

A compressed shockwave surge sent Gatouhan flying along with Hydra.

The moment he crashed onto a mountain of rubble that was dozens of miles away, Lisha aimed Tiamat's huge cannon and gathered energy.

「Gatouhan! Get away!」

「Seven Heads-!」

Gatouhan could hear the voice of Earth Dragon division commander Vine, but it wasn't in time.

The impact from his back crashing on rubble caused the back wings that were the flying device to become slow. He was aimed at that timing.

「.....Gu, OOOOH!?!」

The flash with extreme power that was focused into one point.

The huge pillar of light that was fired became the roar of a raging dragon, smashing and piercing everything in the way.

When the wave of blast that shook the air was settled, Hydra was half destroyed, with the arm blown away along with the right shoulder that was covered with armor.

「—U, guhgo, AAaaAAH.....!」

Gatouhan screamed in agony with a pained expression.

Sharis who was carrying Celis flew away and retreated to the direction of the Academy, but the remaining two Dragon Marauders didn't pursue.

Their ability to think was stolen for a while by the reality occurring before their eyes.

Not just because the leader of Dragon Marauder was injured, but because of the distinct transformation.

「What's.....that, that Drag-Ride's shape!?!」(Drakkhen)

Drakkehn muttered. Vine was also dumbfounded after her.

There, the shape of Tiamat that Lisha wore was completely changed from before.

Above the thick shoulder armor, another gallant back wings that was a size

larger were covering it.

The conspicuously large flying device and the body balance that was compensation for it.

A sublime form that realized high speed mobility made Lisha's movement just now possible.

「Above Tiamat's armor, one more.....Wyvern is covering it further?」

「Do you want an explanation? Then ascertain it with your body! The power of 《Wyvern Wing》 that I created!」

When Lisha touched the Sword Device of Wyvern on her waist, the huge armor of back wings shined and Tiamat accelerated like a bullet.

Vine Hachettes who was picked as the next attack target immediately closed his mouth and put up his guard.

「You targeted me because of your confidence that you win against me in mobility huh. But..... it won't work against my Basilisk!」

Vine backed away in full speed to run away from Lisha while he sharply swung his medium sized Blade.

Even while being pressured by that overwhelming mobility, he skillfully controlled his armored legs that had sliding wheels attached to weave left and right, getting out from the targeting of Lisha's cannon muzzle.

And then— after he fired several of his weapons to hold back his opponent, he suddenly went forward to take her by surprise.

「Right here! Curse Fader!」

Basilisk's Divine Raiment—the force field of instantaneous binding that petrified the enemy's movement was showering Tiamat.

Tiamat backed away in a flash so it didn't get hit in full, but Tiamat's red armored arm along with the weapon the arm was holding turned stiff.

「Good job Vine! With this— that Princess-sama cannot use her two special armaments.」

On the other hand, Drakkhen who was watching the battle develop while

conducting minimal treatment to stop the bleeding of Gatouhan whose arm was blown away yelled in exultation.

But, at that instant she saw something that made her shudder.

The huge armor that was covering Tiamat's back wings was called off and Lisha sheathed the Wyvern's Sword Device.

In addition she quickly unsheathed the Sword Device of a Wyrms this time.

「What are you planning to do? Did you give up and cancel—wha-!?!」

Drakkhen noticed Lisha's trick.

The reason why Lisha was carrying three other Sword Devices other than Tiamat's.

Transcendental Armor
「Over Unit – On!」

「She is, equipping another Drag-Ride on top of her Divine Drag-Ride.....!」

Drakkhen raised a voice of wonder, at the same time a Drag-Ride's high speed summoning—a connection was started.

Converged light particles summoned a remodeled Wyrms in midair, and it transformed into armor that combined with a part of Tiamat.



In exchange for cancelling the back wing's strengthening, this time two new armored arms were added into the shoulders.

「This is, what in the world.....!?!」

Vine who was witnessing that was dumbfounded. During that time, the two new arms that weren't receiving Basilisk's binding moved.

「《Wyrm Claw》! Try to receive this Dragon Marauder!」

「Ku.....Curse Fader-!」

Even the calm and collected Vine was anxious towards the completely unexpected development.

He immediately attempted to reactivate his Divine Raiment, but Lisha instead aimed at that moment.

The brunt of Wyrm Claw was aimed at the shoulder of the land battle type Drag-Ride Basilisk that Vine wore—the place where the Force Core that could also be called as the power source of the Drag-Ride existed.

If an impact was dealt there, the Drag-Ride output would be temporarily lowered and the Divine Raiment would be weakened due to that.

Of course Vine was also aware of that, but because he had never included the calculation of fighting Lisha in close range until now, he mistook the timing.

「Impossible.....!?! A drill!?!」

The tip of the Wyrm Claw's right arm that Lisha sharply thrust out—had a rare part which was a Drill rotating at high speed. It flicked away the medium sized Blade that Vine used as a shield.

The spiraling spear easily pierced through the barrier and penetrated into Basilisk's shoulder.

「Gu.....AAAAAAH!?!」

The Drill didn't directly hit his flesh, but that intense rotating impact was transmitted from the armor frame into his flesh body. The boy's body screamed as though his inside was grilled.

Naturally, Basilisk's Divine Raiment reactivation misfired. Its armor was half

smashed and torn off—and fell silent completely.

「.....What, a thing.」

Drakkhen who saw that felt a trickle of cold sweat flow down her nape.

Lisha surpassed Gatouhan in mobility, he who owned a flying type Divine Drag-Ride, and she got the better of Vine in close quarter combat, he who owned a land battle type Divine Drag-Ride.

Although the two of them had been injured to a certain degree, they were still beaten up by Lisha just now in the field they specialized in.

Over Unit.

General purpose Drag-Rides were disassembled and then each was remodeled as strengthening parts.

Wyvern Wing strengthened Tiamat's back wings, increasing the mobility and Howling Roar's power by a large margin. Wyrm Claw added two additional arms, in addition the tips of the arms were installed with a Drill and a high frequency Blade respectively.

In addition, the supplemented front armor was also showing reinforced barrier.

「Then—」

In order to save Vine, Drakkhen fired Asp's claw tips and checked Lisha in place.

The explosion before this extinguished almost all the torches in the practice ground, but in exchange the remaining flames from the explosion were illuminating the surroundings here and there.

As though to melt into the shadow where there was no light, Drakkhen used the camouflage function of her special equipment type Divine Drag-Ride and vanished, but—

- Kashan, kashan!*

Inside the darkness, she could hear the sound of Tiamat's Over Unit changing shape further.

「-.....!? What is she doing.....!?」

Drakkhen shivered while using Asp's Radar to find Lisha's position.

When she leaped from the darkness using her four legs and attacked, she obtained a strange feedback.

What was stabbed by the claw she swung down, was a mere rubble.

There was nothing in Lisha's position that was searched by Asp inside the darkness.

「—Wha-!?」

「You got drowned in your scheme huh, Instrumentalist of the Battlefield?」

Drakkhen swung Asp's claw while turning around, but it was easily blocked by the armored arm of Tiamat.

The Drag-Ride's shape was different again from before.

The armored arms of Wyrms Claw had been dispelled. The armor on Tiamat's shoulders, back, and head were reinforced, with a horn that was like an antenna attached.

「Over Unit—《Drake Horn》. This equipment doesn't only have a Drake's special abilities, it's also supplemented with jamming functions to bewilder the opponent's radar.」

「Ku, AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!」

She was too late in noticing.

The last one remaining, Drakkhen would use the darkness to camouflage herself and aimed for a surprise attack. Lisha had seen through that.

Due to the trait of Over Unit that strengthened the ability of Drake, Drakkhen became the one who was ambushed instead. Even while noticing that, she desperately attempted to counter.

If it was hand-to-hand combat in close range, she who had her last trump card would win.

Using the sound of horn flute from Asp's Divine Raiment Hell Choir, she made a Chaff Slime to be attached on her own Drag-Ride.

She planned to directly rub the new type Abyss that could dull a Drag-Ride's movement and lowered the output, but the striking claw slashed empty air.

In that opening Lisha escaped from Drakkhen's range and activated her Divine Raiment's gravity field.

「Suppressor!」

「—Uguh!? AGAAAAaaAAaAA.....!」

The gravity field that was nearly heavier by twice compared to before covered Asp. Its armor creaked and became squashed.

The pressure that felt like tearing apart her whole body caused Drakkhen to twist in agony and she let out a loud shriek.

「Haa, haa..... Drake Horn doesn't only have special ability. It also increases the maximum output of Tiamat itself by a large margin. I almost killed you there huh..... I still need to have you guys, spit out what you know later. About this so called original employer that is.....」

「Since, when.....you became this strong? For a mere Drag-Ride modification, to be this applicable for battle—」

Drakkhen lied spread-eagled on rubble while still wearing Asp that had become ragged.

The Moon was shining brightly in the cold and clear sky.

「Haaa, haaa.....how's that? You see now, my strength.....!」

Lisha who dispelled Over Unit and returned to the normal shape of Tiamat was breathing hard.

Lisha's technique and tactic that she newly learned completely overwhelmed Dragon Marauder, but as expected, this function's burden to the body was great.

She didn't just develop Drag-Rides, she also trained her stamina and mental strength, even so, fighting for a few minutes using it in full power was her limit.

「That's, what I want to say but, half of it isn't my achievement. It's thanks to Lux—and my comrades.」

Lisha slowly formed her words to sort her breathing.

「My stamina is able to handle Over Unit thanks to Celis training me. Because Krulcifer brought back material from the Ruins, and Airi deciphered them for me that I was able to do the remodeling. Because Philuffy and Yoruka accompanied me in the test run, I was able to learn even the close range combat that I was not good at. And then—」

Lisha suddenly paused her words and looked up to the Moon in the sky.

「I was able to work hard because Lux was there for me. Because he became my knight, I was able to continue working hard to become a Princess who is worthy of him. That's why, the reason I'm able to defeat you guys—is thanks to those guys.」

「.....」

Drakkhen kept her four limbs spread out powerlessly while hearing Lisha's words.

「If it's Lux he won't lose. Even if his opponent is a Ragnarok, that guy won't lose. Surely he will save Soffice too. After all he is the personal knight of the New Kingdom's Princess who I recognized!」

When Lisha puffed up her chest proudly, Drakkhen's lips abruptly slackened.

In the practice ground where the sounds of a battlefield had stopped, the heat that was like embers was swaying.

Part 7

Inside the Seventh Ruin, Moon.

A girl was walking alone in a cold corridor that was illuminated by bluish white lamps.

Below, a deathly battle against a Ragnarok was unfolding in the virtual battle field that was separated from this location by countless walls.

A silver haired girl was walking by taking advantage of that distraction.

The partition wall towards the deepest part that normally would be solidly closed was opened.

「As I thought, it's open.....」

This must be because the Key's Supervisor Soffice used her ancient authority to unlock the area and then left it alone as it was.

And then right now the Gear Leader Re Plica was also being controlled by the mastermind who once hired Dragon Marauder in the beginning.

She was also worried about Lux and the other girls who were fighting the Ragnarok, but right now she had no leeway to focus on them.

This was the chance that she finally grasped after infiltrating for a long time.

Thus, right now she was moving in order to investigate the Ruin's secret because she had slipped away from the mark on her due to her death.

「If there is a clue, it will be here, but—」

The silver haired girl murmured and the Moon's facility—the door of the 『Study』 was opened.

She weaved through the gaps of the cluttered bookcases and touched a locked box that seemed to store important documents.

Normally, the lock inside a Ruin could only be opened by the authority of the Key's Supervisor, but there was no trace of this box being opened that could be seen.

The lock of the ancient race was undone, but there was one other lock that needed a password that couldn't be opened.

It numbered very few but, this kind of box existed inside the Ruins.

In order to heighten the secrecy, this kind of box needed a Key's Supervisor and a Lord—the knowledge of the two sides to open.

「.....」

The girl inputted the number and unlocked it.

And then, she put her hand on the history book inside and flipped through the pages. She muttered keenly.

「I finally, found it—」

The path to reach the truth of the locked past.

The reason of the very existence of this Ruin and the secret of Avalon.

Why did Sacred Eclipse exist?

Why were the Ruins abandoned and the rulers of the past disappeared?

「I.....have to know the truth.」

What she was, and what she had to fight for.

After the girl woke up, she grasped the situation in general through the data and history she could obtain.

But, just from that there were still a lot of existing puzzles that she couldn't comprehend.

She had a mission to deal with a lot of people from here on, exactly because of that she wouldn't be able to accept it without knowing the truth.

Thinking that, by her own judgment the girl was moving in order to know the hidden truth.

The girl possessed a gentle moral value that was different from her big sister

and little sister. But, after coming here with expectations, she harbored regret for the first time.

「Elixir, White Hero..... Sacred Eclipse. Don't tell me.....! How can such thing—」

Her well-ordered face warped into grief and she shuddered.

The contents of that book where the true identity of Avalon was written.

The reason why the thing that was the greatest even among the ancient technologies and legacies was sealed.

It wasn't anything like a wisdom that would bring wealth for the people.

「It's the opposite—! What we are searching for isn't anything like a legacy to save the world!」

She held her finger on her eye that changed color due to Baptism and raised a groaning voice in anguish.

She put her hand on her chest to hold down her breathing that became rough from agitation and squeezed.

「If the people of the world right now knew this, everything will end. We—no, everyone won't be able to stop it anymore.....!」

The ideal coexistence that she personally discovered was fiction.

The girl yelled when that fact was thrust on her.

There was no room for choice.

There was already no more path except to lock the matter away so no one would know it.

「Lux-kun, ^{boku} |<—」

The girl squeezed her hand tightly on her chest as though to harden her determination.

The yellow-green pupil in her right eye shined, and she pressed her lips on each other hard.

Part 8

—*GIINN!*

A high pitched metallic sound resounded inside the small room.

Inside the room where one could look down to the spherical space where Lux was fighting against a Ragnarok, Soffice who received a Sword Device, pulled out the blade from its sheath.

What was hidden inside the sheath of the Wyvern that Lux had, was the Sword Device of Soffice's Divine Drag-Ride Vritra.

「What the.....?」

The mysterious person who controlled Re Plica let out her doubt with a blank voice.

In the next instant, Soffice quickly recited the passcode.

「—Born from the flame, is the abhorred god. Devour the hatred and reason and transcend, Vritra!」

Particles of light whirled in high speed in front of the girl along with the passcode, forming a turmeric colored armor that possessed slender form.

Re Plica's body that was reflexively swinging her knife floated in the air and then she got crucified on the wall behind.

Furthermore, Vritra threw a Dagger and Wire Tail consecutively and entangled Re Plica's body, automatically binding her.

Trajectory control—Vritra's Divine Raiment to freely control an object's movement subdued Re Plica in the blink of an eye.

「.....How!? Why was that Sword Device there!? You shouldn't have any time to bring it here!」

「That's why, you are wrong.」

Airi who was freed from the choking coughed *keho-keho* while adding more words.

「From the beginning, Nii-san was carrying it by pretending it was his own Sword Device. He planned to return it to Soffice-san at the very end—to persuade her.」

「Why, did you intend to return this? Even though I might run away—」

Soffice turned towards Airi wearing her Vritra and asked.

「That's, because it's Nii-san. Because he believes that you aren't a bad person. He is doing his all in order to have you trust him.」

「.....」

「If you escape, Nii-san will just challenge you to a fight to persuade you again. That's the kind of hopeless person Nii-san is.」

Airi muttered, seeing the figure of Lux outside the broken small window, who was continuing to fight desperately even now.

Soffice too also chased after Airi's gaze and looked down towards Lux with a blank face.

「I see.」

Lux was unable to use Over Limit because he forgot the passcode for some reason, but right now he attempted any trick he could do many times and struggled to overcome Deus ex Machina.

「.....You're going to cling to the family of traitors? You, who was tricked by the imperial family of the Old Empire that killed your little sister!」

Re Plica yelled while being tied by Wire Tail and crucified by Dagger.

But, Soffice activated the Divine raiment of Vritra. The Wire Tail moved by itself and plugged Re Plica's mouth.

「Don't keep talking as you please using that face and voice. I won't run away anymore. Even if I get betrayed again, it's fine.....I won't give up believing, in someone who wants to believe.」

「Soffice-san.....」

「Thank you.....young man's little sister. Thanks to you, I can take back my wish.」

A faint smile surfaced inside Soffice's nihilistic expression.

Right after that, Soffice held her Sword Device once more and lifted it high above while strongly sending her thought.

「—Full Connect – On.」

Right after she muttered, the armor of Vritra that was wrapping her body shined intensely.

A part of it covered her limbs, changed into minuscule mechanical particles that assimilated with her flesh.

Her body surface became similar like the surface of a Sword Device, geometrical patterns made from silver lines ran on the surface like a tattoo.

The clan of the beginning that created the Ruins and produced the Drag-Rides.

This was a form that was possible only for the Xfer who possessed the greatest aptitude value.

Soffice who was half transformed into a machine lifted up her hand, and the glass before her was smashed apart due to Vritra's Divine Raiment.

She took a stance with a middle sized war hammer in her hand and leaped outside.

「Soffice!? That form—no, is Airi safe!?!」

「The little sister is safe. Leave the rest for later. Prepare your full power attack for the Ragnarok. My Vritra's firepower is lacking.」

「But, Deus ex Machina has teleportation! Even if I continue to move, the enemy will teleport and evade—」

「It's fine just attack. If it's the enemy's teleportation, I won't let it.」

「Eh.....?」

「Don't you, believe in me?」

Lux smiled wryly hearing Soffice's voice that sounded somewhat sulky.

「—Got it. I'll leave it to you, Soffice.」

After a short exchange, Lux touched Bahamut's Sword Device.

Drag-Ride's mind control operation and body control operation.

By giving contradictory orders of holding back and releasing at the same time, strength was gathered like a drawn bow.

The variable frame of Mythrildite creaked, and the armor began to tremble as though it was going to distort.

It was one of Drag-Ride control's three hidden techniques, Recoil Burst.

But, against Deus ex Machina that could teleport itself and others, until now it would always escape and the attack couldn't hit.

Even so Lux—believed in Soffice who said 「I'll do something」.

He squeezed out his little remaining stamina, and at the timing when he was going to prepare, the Ragnarok moved.

「.....-!?!」

It held up its huge steel arm like a destruction hammer, and then released a thrust that the eye couldn't follow.

Lux who was transitioning to the act of gathering strength was bewildered by the Ragnarok that began to boldly move forward and he couldn't switch to offense.

「Perhaps it is guessing our attack, it's coming to stop us without using its ability.」

「No, that's not all. Be careful Nii-san! The enemy's body is shining.」

「——」

The space in front of Lux distorted flexibly at the same time with Airi's voice.

Lux immediately leaped backward and escaped from the danger, but a broken glass fragment from just now that was at that spot was annihilated into powder.

「It's compressing the space to squash the target. Anyone in its range will be killed instantly no matter what kind of defensive power they have.」

「No way.....!」

The Ragnarok was attacking consecutively with its huge arms while also using the special ability of compression in offense. Lux was forced into a one-sided defense.

Lux continued to escape round and round inside the spherical space, with Deus ex Machina chasing him.

It was only for dozens of seconds, but that pattern was continuing. Soffice who was measuring the timing from a slight distance away became anxious.

「This is bad. The Ragnarok is starting to predict his movement. At this rate—he will be caught.」

「Please wait, Soffice-san.」

Soffice said that and she was going to fly in assistance, but Airi stopped her with a calm voice.

「Please believe in Nii-san's strength. That face isn't the expression when Nii-san is being cornered.」

「.....What do you mean?」

Airi who was gazing at the movement of Lux and Ragnarok from above muttered.

「Nii-san's most excellent point is his strength to see through his opponent's movements and predict their actions. Then his quickness in forming a plan and his courage to execute it. Nii-san isn't just running away while doing useless things repeatedly.

「.....」

「Nii-san will surely turn to counterattack soon. At that time, please carry out your plan without fail. The trump card for the sake of defeating the Ragnarok—」

Part 9

「Ku, kukukukuku.....hahahahahah!」

Around the same time, right below the Moon.

On the mountain of rubbles of the practice ground where Dragon Marauder was seemingly defeated, a man stood up while laughing loudly.

The large man who was the Wyvern division commander, the leader of Dragon Marauder, Gatouhan.

But, his Divine Drag-Ride Hydra was half destroyed, and he also lost his right hand starting from his right shoulder. He was all but dead.

Lisha who saw that hid her exhaustion and warned the man.

「Stop it, you'll really die if you force yourself with that body. Just stay there quietly.」

What Lisha said was a fact.

Lisha, too, had her stamina exhausted from doing Over Unit repeatedly and she didn't have any strength left to use it again.

As expected though, she wasn't so worse off that she would be done in by the current Dragon Marauder, but she was undoubtedly wounded all over.

「A knight you can trust? Becoming a master who is worthy of that.....? Kuhahaha! Now you said it. The way you are talking sounds like it's only you guys who are walking the correct path.」

「Does it sound like that?」

「All you bastard nobles, using your authority to persecute us. Those people are unforgivable. Such path like that— isn't available for us right from the start.....!」

- Pakii*, there was a high-pitched sound like ceramic breaking, and Hydra's shoulder began to shine.

His Divine Raiment should be unable to even activate properly anymore, but—

「If it's your grudge then I'll listen to it later! If you move more than that..... —!?!」

The moment Lisha aimed her Cannon's muzzle toward Gatouhan, the other two division commanders Vine and Drakkhen moved.

Lisha put up her guard thinking that they would attack her for sure, but they only took position beside Gatouhan.

「You guys don't mind right, Vine, Drakkhen?」

「Yeah, I too don't want to become a prisoner like this and survive on shamelessly.」

「We'll leave it to you. We've got to show them too, our pride as mercenaries.....」

「You bastards, what are you planning-!」

Lisha immediately raised her voice to stop them, but at the same time, Hydra's armor began to shine ominously.

That flash blinded her eyes. When the light vanished before long, a shadow of a beast emerged from inside the jet black darkness.

「.....What the!?!」

The repulsive figure that appeared before her eyes caused Lisha's shoulders to tremble.

That wasn't a person, or an Abyss, or even a Drag-Ride.

It was a form of ominous armor that distorted unsightly.

A different arm grew from the armor's arm, claws and fangs poked out from it back. An irregular shape.

It was a form of a poisonous monster, while at the same time it was baring

the fangs of overwhelming killing intent.

What appeared before Lisha's eyes was Gatouhan who was clad in a three-headed Drag-Ride. Even the part of his body that was lost was shut and healed.

In exchange the other two division commanders, Vine and Drakkhen, vanished.

It wasn't just the Drag-Rides they wore, but even their flesh bodies inside the armors.

「—You, fused them!? The body of you three, and even the three Divine Drag-Rides!？」

The fusion ability of Hydra's Divine Raiment—ReAlive.

It was applied to his own comrades, combining their half-destroyed Divine Drag-Rides, and even stopped the bleeding of Gatouhan's own body.

He devoured the very existence of his comrades who accompanied him until now and sacrificed them—

「What the hell are you doing! Those guys are.....!」

Lisha shivered towards that strategy that sacrificed even themselves while glaring at the enemy before her.

In contrast, the tan-skinned large man lifted his Blade along with an inhuman grin of the abyss.

「Let's go.....! To blow away those who hinder us, the royalty and nobles who proclaimed the path of righteousness! Burn into your eyes, the power of the dragon who is taking revenge on the world!」

The outrageous armor of darkness color shined. Hydra that was the fusion of three Drag-Rides flew.

While being pressured by that killing intent, Lisha fired her Cannon to intercept.

Part 10

Above Lisha and Dragon Marauder.

Inside the virtual Battle Space that existed inside the seventh Ruin Moon.

After obtaining Soffice's cooperation, Lux was forced into disadvantage facing Deus ex Machina.

Soffice who was watching that sight from above along with Airi in the neighboring observation room tried to assist, but Airi stopped her believing that it was Lux's plan.

「Got it.」

Seeing Airi's serious gaze, Soffice nodded.

「If the worrywart you believes until that much, then surely it's not wrong.」

Replying like that, Soffice lifted her Sword Device once more and sent her thought.

The instant kill attack that was impossible to defend against, the space compression that Deus ex Machina unleashed.

The moment Lux leaped backward and escaped from that, the Ragnarok stretched out its huge arms in a pursuing attack.

The offensive of the Ragnarok was gradually quickening and Bahamut's armor started to get grazed.

And then, finally Deus ex Machina caught up to Lux's movement.

「Nii-san—!」

Airi clenched both her hands tightly and prayed.

The surrounding space of Lux warped and he was going to get crushed. In that instant, crimson flash surged out from Bahamut.

「—Reload on Fire!」

In a radius of several ml with Lux as the center—which was the place that had just become the target of the space compression, the Divine Raiment of compression and strengthening was applied.

The time of space compression that was unleashed by Deus ex Machina was lengthened. In that timing, the fist that the Ragnarok shot out thrust in.

「—iOOoooOOON」

The moment it caught Lux with a blow and it became convinced of victory, Lux was sent flying from that place by the impact. In exchange the Ragnarok moved forward.

At that moment, the space compression that was decelerated by Reload on Fire operated with several times more speed. The Ragnarok's main body that was in that space was squashed like cotton candy.

「.....G!, iOooOoOOOOONN!」

It raised a high pitched shriek that sounded similar like creaking metallic sound. Deus ex Machina came to a stop.

Because the space in front of it was compressed and it got hit by its own ability, even the hardy shell that was comprised from dozens of layered Mythrildite couldn't do anything.

「Making it get hit by its own attack..... So that's his aim.」

Soffice who understood Lux's strategy watched in fascination and muttered.

He was an absurd young man just like the rumor said.

Understanding that he would be unable to destroy the Ragnarok alone in this situation, he skillfully led it into a tactic that made it self-destruct.

The ability to discover that possibility in a short time and the guts to carry it out.

The discernment to grab the perfect timing.

「Airi. Right now I understand your feelings that put your trust in your big brother. Mahapurana!」

At the same time, Soffice who was staying still until now to gather strength activated Vritra's Divine Raiment.

Trajectory control—with the power that governed over material's movement, the half-destroyed body of Deus ex Machina was pulled away from Lux.

「.....Gl, OooOO-!?!」

The Ragnarok was sent flying in high speed inside the spherical space and crashed strongly on the wall behind.

It fell face up from the impact. At that moment, it was accelerated once more to the front without any time to land first.

「So, it's like that.」

Airi who was watching from the broken window of the observation room muttered. At that time Lux was already finished preparing.

「Recoil Burst-!」

Lux charged with Bahamut and released the gathered strength towards Deus ex Machina that was sent flying at high speed.

The flash of great sword that was produced from the accumulation of strength until the utmost limits penetrated the half destroyed shell and smashed the core.

Distorted shriek and metal fragments scattered inside the Battle Space, and before long silence returned.

Part 11

At the same time when the Cannon's blast burst out, the Hydra of Gatouhan that had absorbed his two comrades leaped towards Lisha.

The jet black practice ground that had been gouged and frayed until it looked like ruins.

Illuminated by the few remaining fire there, a Drag-Ride with repulsive and distorted form accelerated.

「—Howling Roar!」

Now that she couldn't use Over Unit because her stamina was at the limit, Lisha fired a shockwave to open distance between Tiamat and the opponent.

But, Gatouhan seemed to have predicted that. He twisted his body and dodged. He made use of his spiraling momentum and dispatched Wire Tail.

「U, guh.....!?!」

Tiamat's armor that received it creaked. The piercing impact caused Lisha to lose her breath.

Originally Wire Tail would be used to entangle the opponent rather than as a weapon, but for some reason it possessed astounding striking power here.

When she looked closer, the whip was fused with countless rubbles and turned into a striking weapon that looked like a flail.

「Fusing weapons and rubble into one to make an improvised striking weapon.....!?!」

Lisha got hit further with a mowing down strike from the whip and her balance crumbled. She concentrated her mind in order to activate Tiamat's Divine Raiment.

「—.....uh!?!」

But, in that instant a discordant sound that stirred up her brain rang out, disturbing her concentration.

It was a discordant sound that harmed the human body, coming from the Divine Raiment of Asp that Drakkhen wore.

The ability to manipulate sound was also absorbed as it was by Hydra.

「We won't lose to you bastard. Someone like you who is allowed to do what is right, who is allowed to attain righteousness, there is no way we will lose against you!」

Furthermore, the Divine Raiment Curse Fader of Basilisk that was also absorbed was sealing Tiamat's armored arm.

No, Tiamat's armored leg was also glued to the broken audience seat below. Even its movement was sealed.

Consecutive attacks of whips showered down from above like a heavy rain. Even when Lisha deployed Tiamat's barrier in full, she was struck mercilessly from above.

Her concentration was disturbed by the discordant sound, and she was unable to use her Divine Raiment.

She also had no leftover stamina to use Over Unit. There was also no comrade who could still move.

Within that hopeless situation, even so Lisha didn't yield.

「You bastard royalty and nobles stole it! Until now, you all always stole from us the path where we can be righteous! You saw us as nuisances and drop us down to become criminals, you used every kind of privilege to exploit us! That rule, it won't change as long as we don't take away this world! We will be able to obtain it! The power of Avalon that can make all of you prostrate before us!」

Gatouhan should be similarly wounded all over like Lisha, but even while blood was spurting out from all over his body, his momentum wasn't weakening.

He was showering her with attacks that were like surging waves as though he was burning his remaining life as fuel.

A suicide attack that wouldn't be reluctant to throw away one's own life.

Lisha who was nearing her limit was pushed back by the spirit that was prepared for one's own death.

—But, the sparks that fluttered up from the remaining fire in the practice ground.

The red radiance floating in the darkness was firing up Lisha's heart.

『.....If you did, then kill me right here as well.』

Lisha's childhood past.

The sight of the castle of the Old Empire that was felled and enveloped in flame was resurrected inside Lisha's mind.

『If the empire is going to fall, then I don't have any other place where I belong to—』

As a daughter of a noble, she was taken hostage against her father who was trying to achieve a revolution. She was then abandoned by her father and resolved herself to defect to the Old Empire.

In order to survive, and because she was abandoned by the person who she loved the most.

Even so, in the end, her fate was still that of complete ruin.

It wasn't an easy path by any means.

She didn't even know when it would be the end for her.

Even when she became the Princess of the New Kingdom as the memento of the great man that was her father, it was agonizing for her all the time.

At that time, the side of Lux's face emerged inside Lisha.

Lisha whose own father wouldn't save her, was saved by that young man even at the risk of his life, that figure of his—

「Don't, SCREW WITH MEeEEE-!」

Lisha pulled out her Sword Device and controlled Tiamat inside the discordant noise.

What she activated was the remaining ten projectile weapons, Legion.

She fired them to the ground below her and smashed the audience seat that was glued to her by the enemy's Divine Raiment, tearing off the binding.

In addition she fired her Cannon from zero distance to Hydra, and she took distance from the enemy using the impact backlash.

Lisha herself received large damage from the backlash in that range, but she didn't hesitate.

As expected the enemy also defended, but just for a moment the enemy was bewildered with shock.

- KiiN*, the fanning shockwave that burst right before her caused her eardrum to be torn painfully.

But at the same time, the discordant sound that bound Lisha until now was cut off.

「What are you doing? You feel like blowing yourself—?」

「—I'm also resolved! Though you won't get it! Suppressor!」

「What-.....!?」

The Divine Raiment was activated from Seven Heads' muzzle along with Lisha's loud roar.

The unexpected happening caused Gatouhan to hesitate in making a decision. It sealed his fate.

Purple gravity sphere that was hyper compressed was fired.

The moment it impacted Gatouhan, it pulled in the curved armor of Hydra and fixed it in place.

- Baki-baki* It made dry sounds and Hydra's frame creaked, warped, and broke.

「Gu.....nu, OOOOOOooOOOAAAAAAAH!?!」

Hydra burst and scattered along with Gatouhan's scream.

Right after that, Lisha who arrived at her limit also got her armor automatically dispelled.

「Chih.....good grief, that was uncool.....」

An extreme exhaustion that felt like burning her nerves took away strength from Lisha's limbs.

When she collapsed on top of the rubble like that, she could hear the voice of someone dear.

Part 12

「—Lisha-sama! Hang in there!」

「.....Nn, u」

Hearing the young man's voice who shook her slightly and seeing the gray colored eyes peering at her face woke Lisha up.

Was it only a few minutes since the battle just now?

Lux wearing Bahamut held Lisha in his arms.

「Lu, x.....you're, safe.」

Seeing Lisha patting her chest in relieve, Lux also showed a relieved smile.

「The Ragnarok in the Moon was defeated. We also obtained the Grand Force.」

It seemed the original employer of Dragon Marauder had escaped a step ahead, but for now there was no worry that Avalon would be seized away.

And then, Soffice was standing behind him.

Her face was blank just as usual, but she was staring at Lisha without hostility in her gaze.

「I see, so that girl is saved too huh.....」

「Yes. I was saved, by you too.」

Soffice nodded honestly. Airi also showed her face from beside Soffice.

「Noct and the others are guarding our surroundings. Krulcifer and the others, also everyone in the Academy are currently safe.」

「Lisha-sama has fought well. Even though originally I have to protect you no matter what.....I'm disqualified as Lisha-sama's knight.」

Lux hung his head down apologetically, but Lisha shook her head slightly with

her weakened body and smiled.

「.....You are saying nonsense. Haven't you protected me? You properly fought together with me.」

「That's—」

「It seems her head got hit in the fight. She should be carried to the medical room right away.」

「Err.....Soffice-san. I think that's not it.」

Airi retorted to Soffice who was muttering somewhat in bewilderment.

At the side, Gatouhan who lied down as though he died raised a groan.

「Is this, fate..... We, who were unable to choose the respectable path by birth, are we fated to be no match against you all even after throwing away everything.....」

Tension ran through Lux and the others for a moment, but they immediately comprehended that there was no need to be on guard.

Vine and Drakkhen who were fused with Hydra's Divine Raiment had already been separated back as corpses.

The remaining Gatouhan also had his flesh starting to crumble. It was clear that death was approaching him.

「—Something like a respectable path, do you think it can be traveled on when you don't even try to walk on it.」

Lisha spoke with her feeble breath.

Lisha herself was extremely fatigued. Her voice was faint.

But, she declared to Gatouhan with a strong voice that didn't shame the mettle of a Princess.

「What, did you say.....?」

「Why were you all unable? You had the respectable path stolen from you by power and got reduced to bandits. Even so, you obtained comrades who you could rely on your own way, and you obtained strength. Why didn't you try to return to the respectable path then? You all were simply running away. You

surrendered yourself to anger and revenge, and picked the same path like those bunches you hated—by your own choice, that's all.」

「.....」

「You guys are scared that what you have would be stolen again. Even if you try to walk the respectable path, someone else somewhere will consider you all as nuisance again. They will steal from you. That's why this time you will be the one in the ruling side. That's everything you all can think about. You all only tried to repeat the same thing just like the bunch who stole the respectable path from you!」

「Shut, your mouth! A mere decoration Princess! You bastard who simply got placed into the seat of Princess by accident after the Old Empire was destroyed..... You bastard who got the respectable path laid out before you without any suffering or hesitation!」

「There is no such thing!」

Airi responded to Gatouhan's angry yell.

「The path Lisha-sama walked wasn't such easy path! She was caught by the Old Empire as a hostage, she was considered as dead, and turned traitor. But—she worked hard as the daughter of Count Atismata, as the New Kingdom's princess! No matter how painful she felt, she didn't do anything like averting her eyes from anything inconvenient like you all!」

「Airi.....」

Soffice's eyes snapped open in surprise, while Lisha silently breathed in.

Within Lux's embrace, she looked down on the leader of Dragon Marauder with eyes that were filled with pity somewhere.

「.....I'm the same like you. All I had was stolen and stolen, that I got convinced that there is no other way. That's why I also cannot say anything self-importantly.」

Lisha put her hand on her chest and continued with a docile face.

「But, that's right. Even if for example I meet the same experience like you guys, if Lux will stay besides me, then I think I'll be able to stay on the right

path. If it's this man who keeps looking ahead even when he is cursed for being an evil imperial family member of the Old Empire or called as the Chore Prince, I believe that's what I would do. That's, the difference between me and you all.」

「.....」

Gatouhan lost his words after Lisha spoke.

He only kept staring at Lisha's straightforward eyes while his flesh was crumbling.

「—So that's why, you didn't waver. You actually fought with stronger determination than our tenacity..... No wonder we lost.」

‘Fuh’, a dry smile emerged on his lips, but even that crumbled down.

He wasn't resigned, it was a strange feeling of satisfaction from defeat, and loneliness that were emerging from inside.

「Vine, Drakkhen, sorry. If only this me was a bit more decent. If only I had, a proper caliber as a leader.....」

He reached out his hand towards the remains of his comrades that had crumbled into ash, but it didn't reach.

「Even so—even if it was a mistaken path, the two of them must be thankful to you who gave them a place to belong.」

Soffice who was watching until now raised her voice towards such Gatouhan.

「I who was alone and unable to reach an understanding with anyone, knows it.」

「.....You who were betrayed by us shouldn't have any worthless sympathy for us. Stupid.」

「I guess. It was a short association but, sayonara.」

At the same time when Soffice told that, Gatouhan's presence vanished and he became a corpse.

Lisha was seeing off that death while strength left her body completely.

「However, it's a bit unfortunate. I couldn't show off my active role to you. Even though if you watched, then you will surely get a better opinion of me—」

Lisha let out a long sigh while showing a wry smile.

In response Lux replied back with an earnest smile.

「I won't get an even better opinion of Lisha-sama than this. Lisha-sama really is a lovely princess.」

「—!?」

The moment Lux smiled widely, the face of Lisha-sama who was being held in a princess carry by Bahamut's armored arms was dyed bright red.

After looking completely flustered, she stared still into Lux's eyes and, 「I, I see! The, then, you can give me something like a bit of a reward or—」

「.....Lisha-sama. Do you remember about the pact?」

In response to Lisha whose eyes were brightening, Airi whispered with a lowly voice into her ear.

Until the battle regarding Avalon was over, any approach from the girls towards Lux was forbidden.

「Guaah! Tha, that's right! Even though the atmosphere is finally nice! Why is the timing bad only when it's my turn!」

「This young man is a teasing type? As expected, he might be a bad guy.」

「Yes, if I take my eyes off him, he will woo a new girl right away. Nii-san is really a bad man.」

「Wai-, why are you two in agreement like that!?」

Lux retorted while walking towards the Academy with Lisha in his arms.

The promised date with Magialca was going to arrive right about now.

Epilogue – The Path Leading to Sanctuary

Part 1

That night, after the matter with Dragon Marauder was concluded.

The talk with Soffice was settled due to Magialca who came to check on the situation.

At the same time the danger that was approaching the New Kingdom also came to an end. Queen Raffi was also liberated from the heavy responsibility temporarily.

Magialca listened to the story from Lux and Airi and accepted Soffice's surrender.

Because Soffice's relationship with Dragon Marauder was only being their employer temporarily, she refined a plan to allow Soffice to be accepted by the countries.

In short, for the sake of capturing Dragon Marauder, Soffice intentionally acted hostilely to the world alliance under Magialca's orders. That would be how they explained it.

Of course, the alliance wouldn't accept it with just that after all the confusion they were thrown into.

But in addition to the annihilation of Dragon Marauder, the remaining two Grand Forces were also obtained. Exactly because they obtained such ideal results that it became a material that could possibly persuade the countries.

Right after Lux and Soffice defeated Deus ex Machina, the employer of

Dragon Marauder seemed to escape right away, leaving the Moon completely deserted.

There was also Re Plica who returned to her senses, but it seemed the details of the events were erased from her memory and she couldn't recall them.

After that, Soffice entrusted the management of the Moon to her and it was decided that Soffice would be left under the Academy's watch for a while.

.....

In the end, the mastermind who moved the Moon at that time was still shrouded in mystery.

Even so, from the chain of events until now Lux had a suspicion of the true identity of this person who was moving behind the scenes.

「Fuu.....」

Deep at night, Lux was looking up to the ceiling of his own room in the girl's dormitory alone and sighed.

He was also worried about the matter of Coral.

From the story of Lisha and the others, after participating in the battle against Dragon Marauder, it seemed Coral got injured by the explosion and died. But when they searched after that, for some reason they couldn't find his corpse.

Was he really dead, or else—

「.....」

In any case, now that they had all the Grand Forces collected, arriving at Avalon was the priority right now.

The abandoned capital at Marcafal Kingdom, Gelsera. (TN: Now it's back to Gelsera again, so I guess the previous one was the author's mistake) Magialca already built a base near that old castle. It seemed she was arranging logistics from all the countries of the world alliance starting from a Drag-Ride hangar and food.

A swarm of powerful Abyss was clamoring around Avalon, and even more complex traps were set up inside the old fortress. That was the report they

received from the scouting force.

The capture of Avalon by Drag-Knights dispatched from various countries and the Seven Dragon Paladins was finally going to start from next week.

Lux was thinking of such thing while starting to take off his clothes.

He was unable to enter the large public bath today due to time circumstances, so he would only wipe his body using a towel that was soaked into hot water.

It was a bit unsatisfactory in this season where the winter was at its peak, but he couldn't ask for luxury.

After wiping his face with a hot towel, he continued with his neck, chest, shoulder, back—and then, the moment he untied his belt and pulled down his trousers—*knock knock*. A knocking sound could be heard.

「Err, is someone inside?」

「Ah, yes. Right now I'm in the middle of changing, so can you wait for a bit?」

Lux hurriedly replied at Soffice's voice that he could hear from behind the door.

Lux was recalling about the barging events that repeatedly happened in this room while feeling relieved that this time an incident was somehow averted.

But, in contrast with that expectation of Lux, Soffice spoke out an unexpected sentence.

「I see. If it's just the young man inside, that makes it much easier.」

「Yes. I'll be thankful if you—huh.....eeh!?!」

The door of the room opened at that moment and Soffice wearing her usual pilot suit leaped inside.

Lux reflexively tried to hide his body, but his towel was taken away.

「Wai-!? What are you doing Soffice!? I told you I'm in the middle of changing—!?!」

「I know. I'm in your debt young man, but that is that, this is revenge. Because you had seen my embarrassing moment, I'll have you, young man, to show me

yours too.」

「That was an act of god! This will be bad in various meanings if someone sees us!」

Lux said that while hiding his body in panic, but Soffice attempted to tear off his clothes from him.

「Show it to me properly, it will only be balanced with that.」

Lux's face was reddening while he desperately prevented Soffice's hand from taking away his underwear.

After a desperate offense and defense that spanned several times was unfolding, the two of them were sitting down when they realized it.

「A, also, that's, in order to deepen relationship as friends, naked association is necessary.....」

「That is for fellow males you know!? Where did you hear that kind of knowledge from!?!」

「I, is that so? I, didn't have a proper friend so I didn't understand..... Err, is it fine, me becoming the friend of you, young man?」

For some reason Soffice averted her gaze with her cheeks dyed red. Lux sighed in response to that while nodding.

「There is no doubt about that. I really think of Soffice as a friend.」



「.....Thank you, young man.」

Soffice's blank face was cold like a mask.

Even so the slightly bashful atmosphere caused Lux's cheeks to loosen.

「The, then, I'll consider the case of you seeing that as you owing me.」

It seemed she had given up on seeing Lux's lower body. Soffice muttered so and stood up quickly.

In that moment, Lux got taken aback from noticing something. He spontaneously averted his eyes and shut his mouth.

「What's the matter? Is there something?」

「No, that, it's a bit hard to tell Soffice right now.....」

「.....? It's fine so don't be reserved, if you think of me as a friend then—」

「Err, that—slipped off.」

「.....?」

Soffice tilted her head in puzzlement, but a few seconds later she noticed.

The cloth on her chest that was clinging to her brown skin shifted from the previous quarrel, and the feminine undulation of her chest became exposed.

「—N-, NOOOoOOOOOOO-!?!」

Soffice raised a high-pitched shriek and ran away at full speed.

After that she declared 「Relationship break off」. A total of one hour was needed to run around the girl dormitory until 「Reconciliation」 was reached.

Also it went without saying that during that time, everyone of Syvalles including the Triad became aware of it and a trouble occurred from that.

In the end, everyone gathered in the dining hall and opened a welcoming party for Soffice.

The night of the Holy Night Festival with the lively girls was advancing.

Part 2

A few days later after that.

After a war council at the royal capital, Lux was called as a Seven Dragon Paladin for the sake of conquering the entrance of Avalon that existed in the Marcafal Kingdom—the abandoned capital Guernica. (TN: Now it's back to Guernica again, what the hell.) At the fortress base located before the old castle which seemed to be where Avalon was, the Drag-Knights group of the world alliance was already in battle.

The abandoned buildings were prepared using Drag-Rides so they became usable, and it seemed that it was arranged so that it was possible for them to fight continuously for a month here, but the old castle had become a den of the Abyss. Even with the chosen Drag-Knights from every country gathered here, they couldn't even approach its surroundings. That was the situation.

With the help of Soffice who was a Xfer, the door to the deepest part of Garden was unlocked. Furthermore after that Krulcifer unlocked the door to the deepest part of Hall. And then it was concluded with Magialca using her authority to liberate those Ruins in turn by placing the Grand Forces there.

And then Lux who departed from the Academy arrived at the Marcafal Kingdom as one of the advance troops along with the other Seven Dragon Paladins as well as the Lords.

「Yo, long time no see, Prince-sama.」

The base town that was the nearest to the abandoned capital—the fort city Forto. When Lux arrived there, Greifer who was in front of the fortress called out to him.

Dull blonde hair, sanpaku eyes, and a sulky attitude. Those were his traits, but in reality he was a good person.

He was the Seven Dragon Paladin of the Vanheim Principality, but the other day his aide, Coral, died in battle.

It seemed the fight against the Abyss protecting Avalon had entered a lull, there was no sign of the enemy in the surroundings.

After talking to the fortress guard and confirming that, the two of them began to walk through a stone corridor.

「Sorry about Coral. That, I was unable to save him.」

「Why are you apologizing? Dying is included in the job of us soldiers. You did the best you could right?」

「That's right.....but」

「Besides, somehow I still cannot believe it. Ain't no way that guy will croak just from an explosion, that's what I feel.」

「.....」

In fact Lux also couldn't believe it.

And also about Coral's dying words that Lux heard from Lisha, where he apologized to him, Lux didn't understand what he meant.

Somehow everything felt in limbo and his guts couldn't accept it.

「One more thing, I've got a basis why I think that guy ain't dead. By the way, this is gonna be a bit of an awful story but, if it's you Prince-sama then I'm fine talking about it, you wanna hear it?」

「Eh.....!?」

Lux was bewildered at Greifer's voice that vaguely gave a hint of a dangerous atmosphere.

「You better not listen to this if you wanna still believe in that guy. It ain't a story that will make you feel good to know.」

「What do you mean? No—let me hear it!」

When Lux flared up with a serious face, Greifer let out a long sigh and began to talk.

「You know about her highness Princess Milmienne, right? Coral was among us as our princess's distant relative but, that guy's name vanished from that family tree.」

「.....Eh!?!」

Lux was resolving himself to not get agitated no matter what he was told, but as expected, he was perplexed in incomprehension.

「The guy called Coral Esther ain't existing from the start among the royalty of the Vanheim Principality. Surely his name also didn't exist in the family tree from the beginning. But for some reason we didn't have any doubt about that guy's status all this time. For nearly a year—nobody noticed it at all.」

「Such, thing, no matter how—」

「It ain't possible, right? Currently we also thought so, yeah. But, I want to ask you Prince-sama, seeing that you were close with that guy. Was that guy male? Or female?」

「-.....!?!」

The moment Lux was asked that, his vision was covered with static like a sandstorm.

Coral's figure in his mind flickered.

His figure that he thought was completely a male figure certainly looked like a girl on one occasion.

Even the color of her hair and eyes were different, he wondered why it looked like that to him?

The true identity of Coral Esther.

How did he become able to notice her true identity so suddenly?

The last Ragnarok Sacred Eclipse.

The secret medicine of evolution, Elixir and Baptism.

A memory that he knew nothing about, and the transformed figure of Coral.

(Why at this time I—)

Where did his perception become mistaken?

Perception, perception.....?

「By the way can I ask a question too? The guy who last contracted Dragon Marauder—the mastermind who made them betray that tanned girl, it seems you got an idea about it, is that true?」

It seemed Greifer heard about that from Soffice.

He was a caring person in spite of his outward appearance, so Lux introduced Soffice to him before this gathering. This seemed to be the result from that.

「Yes.....it's still nothing more than my personal speculation though.」

Although, Lux couldn't be the only one keeping secrets after he heard confidential information from Greifer already.

And so, he said it.

The conjecture that he didn't want to be correct.

A person other than the Lords who shouldn't be in that place, and who was able to control the Moon. If speaking about such person—

「It's.....Hayes vi Arcadia. She should have died, but it's likely that she is alive.」

That way of talking which was conveyed through Re Plica, it was the very tone of Hayes.

And then, in case his reasoning was correct, it hinted at a single fact.

The Lords who right now became the central existence of conquering Avalon.

He didn't know when Hayes was resurrected, but she contacted Dragon Marauder once more and controlled them by using Avalon as bait. If that was the case—

「Oi, then don't tell me.....」

Greifer seemed to reach the same conclusion. His expression turned forbidding. Lux nodded.

「Yes. I have to tell this to Captain Magialca. If she, Hayes, is alive, then from the beginning this battle—.....-!？」

Lux suddenly looked forward. The moment he saw the stone paved corridor, a single person—no, a girl was standing there.

A girl with braided hair wearing a pilot suit for females.

Her face features that looked somewhat androgynous but well-ordered, was familiar to Lux and Greifer.

「Co.....ral!? No, you—」

Greifer's eyes opened wide and he stiffened while raising his voice.

But, the figure of he who should have died was colored differently from before.

The same silver hair and grey pupils like Lux and Airi.

But only her right eye was dyed with faint light green color.

It was the proof of Baptism that the Lord Listelka and Hayes also received.

「—I'm sorry, both of you.」

Coral withdrew her Sword Device with an expression that looked somewhat sad.

Without pause her sword flashed towards Lux and Greifer, hitting the back of their heads.

Fortunately it seemed she was hitting them with the back of her single-edged sword so they weren't slashed, but the impact made them collapse.

It seemed she hit the precise spot, strength left their bodies and their consciousness was getting far.



Lux looked up at her face while still not understanding what was going on.

「.....There is, no more time. All of you are more able than we imagined. If you reach Avalon and learn this world's secret, the truth, the countries will surely cause a bloody war. I'm sorry, for deceiving you two all this time. Also—thank you for calling someone like me a friend.」

「Co.....ral, you, bastard.....!」

Greifer's groan came from the side.

Coral who heard that looked down on the two of them with her differently colored eyes without a single twitch in her expression.

「My name is Aeryl vi Arcadia, the second imperial princess of the Holy Arcadia Empire. The power of Baptism that was applied to me is to use a part of Avalon's system that can convert other people's perception.」

「Perception, conversion?」

「Even though I'm deceiving you two, now I have no more leeway to use this power. Now if I don't use it to trick the eyes of the Seven Dragon Paladins, I wouldn't be able to make it in time.」

In other words, Coral's figure was like this since the beginning.

Whether it was the color of her hair and eyes, or the bulge of her chest, everyone was only made to hallucinate that they weren't there.

「However, don't worry. I won't let Nee-san kill all of you. When this battle is all over and we obtain Avalon, at that time let's one more time—.....such thing, is just too selfish isn't it.」

Coral muttered with a smile that looked somewhat pained.

Lux's consciousness was falling.

At the end Coral's.....no, her voice remained in his ear.

「.....But I, saw a possibility inside you. That's why, I intend to try opposing this fate in my own way. Not just as a Lord. I intend to show my own answer.」

Her footsteps were getting farther.

Someone was carrying Lux's body.

「Thank you, Lux-kun. I really like you, you know?」

「.....」

Not to mention replying, he was unable to even think about those words.

Lux's five senses were enveloped in darkness and before long his consciousness was sinking.

Part 3

A chalk white ship with streamlined shape was hovering in the sky of the New Kingdom.

It was the residence of the Lords as well as an airborne mobile fortress—the prehistory legacy called Heaven Palace.

In the beginning it was a part of Avalon, a vehicle that was exclusively for the use of royalty. It flew at full speed and the other day it entered into the Ymir Theocracy's Hall.

It arrived at the deepest part that had been unlocked by Krulcifer beforehand and the Grand Force was placed there. And then, now it was heading towards the Garden below.

「This is the third including the Dungeon. Looks like I'm number one. With this I finally fulfilled my duty as the shrine maiden of oracle.」

Wearing a pure white dress, the silver haired and grey eyed first imperial princess, Listelka Rei Arshalia said that while patting down her chest in relieve.

Beside her, the blue haired maid, Mishis, was silently standing.

「But, I believe that the body of her highness Hayes might not last long. If we make her participate in the battle ahead, her lifespan that was lengthened by Baptism will become short.」

「Hah.....!」

When Mishis said that and turned her gaze to the side, a robed girl standing there formed a wide grin on her lips.

Two mismatched eyes with gray color and blue color.

The one who once maneuvered secretly by selling weapons from the Ruins as the Dark Marketer, Hayes Vi Arcadia.

After almost dying in her battle against Lux, her body became unable to move, but she recovered her consciousness around two weeks ago and her brainwaves were detected.

What Hayes wished for was to participate in battle even if only temporarily and die, rather than surviving in this condition.

Revenge against Lux and the others who made her feel such bitter experience and accomplishing her dearest wish as a Lord.

Hayes received Baptism of body strengthening on her whole body. Several tattoos with black geometrical patterns were running through half her body.

It wasn't injection of Elixir to transform into a Nocturnal, but a Baptism simply so she could move her body properly.

Naturally, because she was forcefully moving her body that originally couldn't even walk, she wouldn't hold for long.

After around ten more days, Hayes would run out of life force and fell asleep for eternity.

But, Hayes's awakening was a godsend for them.

Making use of Hayes's connection with Dragon Marauder in the past, they succeeded in circumventing Soffice Xfer.

「You talk impudently after making this me to clean up the misconduct of your fellow Xfer. Aren't you ashamed to receive the middle name of the Holy Arcadia Empire after all that huh?」

「Hayes, stop bothering Mishis. If we look further back, it was your bad because you didn't wait for us to wake up correct? This is because you didn't listen to what Fugil said.」

When Listelka chided her, Hayes pouted in annoyance.

「Fugiiil? ^{elder sister} Aneue-sama is also really hopeless, getting so attached to a traitorous asshole like that. Did he make you completely putty in his hands with his technique while I was sleeping?」

Hayes thought of Fugil as 『fishy』 and didn't trust him from before. She snorted scornfully at her elder sister's trust towards him.

But, hearing Hayes's line, Listelka who was usually showing a gentle bearing of a princess was wrapped in killing intent.

「You have become so high and mighty now. My foolish little sister, who had Baptism applied just in her right eye and only obtained the power to rule over Gear Leaders from that, dare to insult me, the shrine maiden of oracle, and him the hero.」

「.....-!?!」

Receiving Listelka's gaze that felt like a sword point, Hayes twitched and turned speechless.

- Chih*, when Hayes clicked her tongue and exited the room, the tense atmosphere loosened slightly.

「Now then, it seems that Aeryl is subduing the Seven Dragon Paladins just as planned, so let's go to Garden soon. If I can arrive at Avalon with this, I will finally be able to correctly rule over this world. Now Mishis, please call my knight here.」

「Understood.」

The maid Mishis bowed to her master. She then walked through the corridor with silver wall and headed to another room.

- Clack clack*, the footstep sound resounded with regular rhythm, giving Mishis time to think.

She couldn't say it just now, but Mishis was also growing unable to trust Fugil.

Even though he who was from the family of traitors saved the imperial princesses of the Holy Arcadia Empire, even though he had been truly loyal until now, she was cautious towards something of him. Though it seemed the second imperial princess Aeryl was also the same as her.

What she felt wasn't something like simple malice or ambition.

Something, yes, it was like his eyes were looking at them as though watching fish in an aquarium. For some reason she was having vague fears from those eyes.

「Fugil. Listelka-sama will disembark from the ship. Please come as guard.」

「—Yeah, got it. I will do as her highness commands.」

Inside the room, Fugil was toying with a golden balance scale.

A cross silverwork was placed on the scale, as though he was testing something.

—

A few hours after that, a proclamation that hit the world into chaos was declared towards the people.

Before the world destruction by Sacred Eclipse, the signal fire of a battle that would shake the underlying principles of each nation was going to be lit right about now.

Afterword

—

Hello.

This is Akatsuki who are worrying whether I should buy massaging machine or not these few years.

—

The time went like a flash until one year after the anime's broadcast, but there were a lot of workload regarding various things in reality, and one day when I noticed both my arms were numb.

Well, after some time passed it will surely get better. That was what I thought and I left it alone, but one week, two week, a month.....there is no sign of it getting better at all.

Although I tried getting examination in the nearby clinic, it was impossible to specify the cause, and when even the tongue inside my mouth started getting numb, I started to question whether it might be some kind of bad disease.

—

Speaking of the conclusion, my body is safe.

The cause is still not known, but I think it might be like a super bad version of shoulder stiffness.

Fatigue was piling up from my back until my shoulders, it became burden to my nerve and came until my two arms.....I don't know whether it's really like that or not, but I believe that there is no doubt that was one of the factors.

—

Even if we can force ourselves, the collateral for that will surely come to the body, so now I'm also somewhat worried to Lux-kun and others who are doing

nothing but acting recklessly in the story.

Although the Seven Dragon Paladins arc is also approaching climax, the path ahead is still quite long.

Next volume will finally be the arc of Coral of the Lord side, or so I think.

—

Then moving to thanks.

Kasuga Ayumu-sama who is in charge of the illustrations this time too.

Greifer and Mel were colorized for the first time. While Mel's cuteness goes without saying, Greifer's coolness is also impressive.

I have hunch that in the next volume, all members of Seven Dragon Paladins will be able to play active role.

—

Well then, I pray that we will be able to meet again at such volume 13.

—